



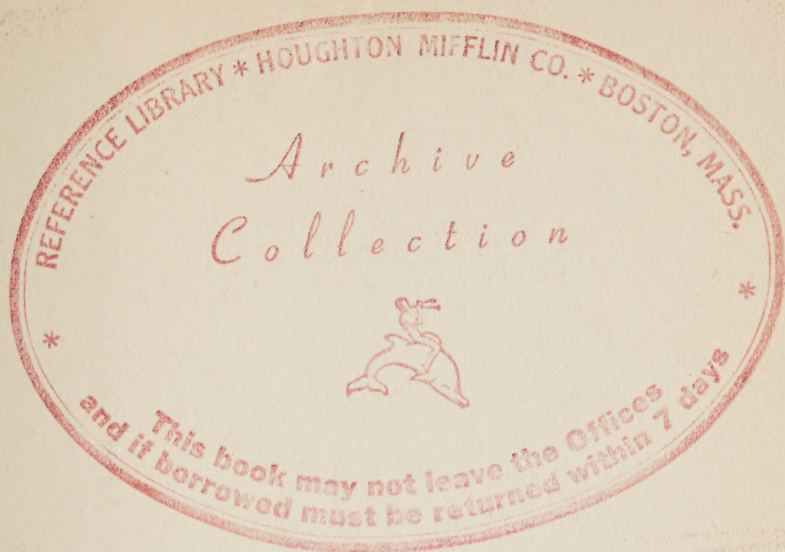
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NORTHERN LIGHTS
AND
SOUTHERN SHADE

NORTHERN LIGHTS AND SOUTHERN SHADE

By
DOUGLAS GOLDRING

With 16 Illustrations



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TO
LUKE AND EVY HANSARD

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PREFACE

THE chapters which follow, like those which made up my earlier volume, *Gone Abroad*, are offered to the reader's indulgence solely as a record of personal impressions and experiences. If it is objected that the use of the first person singular is too pronounced, my excuse must be my firm belief that the personal is the only excusable and modest way of writing about peoples and places of which one cannot claim any profound or intimate knowledge. It presupposes errors, limitations, misunderstandings and every kind of fallibility. On the other hand, if the *ego* be sternly suppressed—as it has to be, for example, in a guide-book—the reader may be misled into regarding the work before him as claiming to be authoritative.

On the day on which I write these lines I have known one Swedish town for a space of rather less than twelve months, and have spent a few days in half-a-dozen others, and I have paid hasty visits to Norway and Denmark. If from such a scanty acquaintance with my subjects I were to write objectively, to state that the Swedes are this or the Swedes are that, I should at once lay myself open to the charge of generalising from incomplete data, of writing about things of which I can know, in reality, very little. It is, however, quite possible for a writer to be

perfectly truthful and accurate about his personal impressions. When I write that "what struck me particularly about the Swedes (or the Bretons) was such and such," I am on sure ground ; and so also is the reader. He knows then that he is not being told what purports to be the whole truth, *ex cathedra*, by one who claims to be an authority. He knows that he is merely being offered what one observer—as to whose acuteness, limitations, intelligence, prejudices and predilections he is free to form his own judgment—believes to be true and considers worth recording. This, therefore, is not put forward as a book "on" Sweden, or "on" any of the places or peoples with which it deals. It will, I trust, be regarded, like its predecessor, merely as a collection of leaves from a traveller's note-book, and judged as such.

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NORTHERN LIGHTS

IN GOTHENBURG

I

STRANGE things happen to those who practise, of necessity, non-resistance to Fate. We Micawbers do indeed lead varied and hazardous lives ! We have our bright moments, as well as our disastrous and gloomy ones. Something "turns up"—queer it is how often something does—and off we start, once more, full of hope and zeal and desire to succeed. The Lord does provide—in His own time, of course, and in His own way. Far be it from anyone so undeserving as myself to make complaints ; but it is a saddening experience, if one wants to become a publisher, to find oneself a lecturer ; and even more chastening, if one happens to love the South, to be propelled, firmly but inexorably, towards the North.

Such was my lot at the beginning of the year 1925. Through the good offices of a friend, I found myself appointed to the position of English Lecturer at the University College of Commerce, Gothenburg, Sweden ; and I had to leave at once to take up my unknown and rather terrifying duties. It was a bitterly cold February afternoon when I started from Liverpool Street. The papers had been full of stories of storms and wrecks, and now the wind was howling and the sleet pelting against the windows of the railway carriage. At

Parkeston the porter shook his head ominously when I enquired about the condition of the sea. "Dirty weather, sir, I'm afraid." A fellow-passenger volunteered the information, which I believe was entirely incorrect, that the incoming boat had been delayed twelve hours by the storm. Another passenger, an English-speaking Danish girl who had fortified herself at dinner on the train with a generous number of double whiskies, remarked cheerfully that, although she was an excellent sailor, somehow she had a "queer feeling" about this crossing, "a sort of presentiment." She went on to explain that our ship, the *Dronning Maud*, had been built for the Baltic and not for the North Sea; that she stood too high out of the water and was top-heavy. Memories of the stories which I used to read as a boy came into my mind. Of course we should "turn turtle"—that was the phrase—without a doubt!

I will commit myself to no ill-omened prophecies about the future history of the *Dronning Maud*. All I will say is that on the present occasion she behaved perfectly, and showed not the faintest disposition to "turn turtle" or do anything else unbecoming a comfortable and seaworthy boat. My experience of small passenger steamers is limited, but the accommodation on this boat struck me as being positively luxurious. The smoking-room, dining-room and music-room were extremely comfortable and well-warmed, and as there were scarcely a dozen passengers on board, we each had cabins to ourselves. A loud-speaker in the smoking-room enabled us to listen to a Symphony concert as we steamed away towards

the open sea. Just before midnight, after we had dropped our pilot, the ship began to dip and roll; but by that time I was half-asleep and the motion was rather pleasing than otherwise. On the following morning the sea was fairly calm, and a wintry sun shone down upon us at intervals. I felt so disgustingly well that I wonder those of my fellow-travellers who were strong-minded enough to emerge from their cabins for breakfast did not fall upon me and pitch me into the sea. One of them, an American "commercial" of the kind that does not increase his country's popularity, observed to me with a scowl that during the night he had been "considerably nauseated." Later on, his efforts to eat his luncheon—or else the sight of me sitting beside him and enjoying my money's-worth—nauseated him still more.

We arrived at Esbjerg at about 10 o'clock on the night following our departure from Harwich, and went on board the train to find our berths in the sleeping-car. As we were not due to start for a couple of hours or more, the American and myself went to the principal hotel, where we found a large café with a noisy band, also a cabaret singer, who addressed her songs rather pointedly to the new arrivals from England. We reached Copenhagen at the comfortable hour of 8.15 a.m. I had nearly twelve hours to spend in that gay and pleasant city, but as I expected to return to it very soon for a longer visit I did not attempt to see many sights. I passed, however, an hour in the modern sculpture gallery, the Ny-Carlsberg Glyptothek, walking through rooms filled with marble statues of very chilly-looking naked ladies

in a variety of luscious poses, and of heroic-looking males whose attitudes expressed nobility, terror, courage, incorruptibility, affection for the opposite sex (very sugary and Germanic, this), ambition or patriotic aspiration. It was easy enough to understand the popularity of Sinding, of whose work the gallery contains many examples. But, heavens, what a sentimentalist ! Of the work of the more modern sculptors—Maillol, Brancusi, Archipenko, Epstein and their like—there were no examples.

The gallery of ancient sculpture, or Gamle Glyptothek, I could do no more than glance at on this occasion. It is rich in Greek originals, and boasts a collection, unrivalled in the world, of Roman portrait statues and busts. Later on, I was to spend many happy hours exploring it. On this first visit to Copenhagen I preferred to wander about the streets in desultory fashion, with no particular objective, trying, as it were, to get the flavour of the place. Certainly few of the great capitals of Europe that I have visited make such a captivating first impression. It is a town with a delightfully “forward” manner—not a gush, but a pleasant, hospitable smile. It is pre-eminently, also, a town of pretty women ; and all the people encountered in the streets looked cheerful and contented. A Danish friend remarked to me on one occasion, with a broad grin on his face, that Copenhagen was “the most demoralised city in Europe after Buda-Pesth.” As to this I have no first-hand knowledge. Danish morals may be non-existent and the gaiety of Copenhagen may, for all I know, be the gaiety

of sheer relief at having dispensed with them. But gay, to the casual stranger's eye, it certainly appears to be. There is something tonic in the air of the town which makes one leave it with regret, and return to it with pleasurable anticipation.

Architecturally this huge capital of a tiny country is full of interest, and even my not too protracted strolls, on my first visit, revealed many ancient buildings of style and splendour, and much admirable modern architecture calculated to fill the Londoner with envy.

At a little after nine in the evening, having foolishly failed to secure a supply of English cigarettes while I had the chance to do so at a reasonable price, I continued my journey. At Helsingör (Elsinore) we changed into a ferry-boat to cross the star-reflecting waters of the Sound to Helsingborg in Sweden. The crossing takes twenty minutes, and during it Swedes and Danes alike crowd into the refreshment-rooms of the boat for their last unrestricted whiskies-and-sodas. At Helsingborg I sought for the Gothenburg *sovvagn*, found my bunk and went to bed, to dream of Malaga and the sunlit shores of the Mediterranean, to which, but for my translation to Gothenburg, I should now have been making my way.

The Gothenburg carriage is detached from the Oslo express at about 2.30 in the morning, and those who have places in it are allowed to sleep, undisturbed, until a reasonable hour. Those not forewarned, or who place their reliance in Travel Agencies and book their sleeping-berths at Copen-

hagen, have the felicity of turning out at Gothenburg, and waiting in the station for six of the most unpleasant hours in all the twenty-four. It was bad enough to have to emerge from the steamy, overheated sleeping-car at the comparatively normal hour of eight. The sky was a repulsive grey, and flakes of melting snow drifted about in desultory fashion. I could see nothing but railway lines and factory chimneys ; and a flood of such acute misery overcame me that I could have sat down upon my suit-cases and buried my head in my hands and howled for somebody to come and kill me. However, I thought I would have a hot bath first and postpone my suicide till later, so I passed the customs and drove to the nearest hotel. It was a gloomy barrack of a building, but warm and clean and comfortable inside. The chambermaid who accompanied me to my bath had armed herself with a lethal weapon in the shape of a scrubbing-brush, attached to a long wooden handle. As she was quite six feet high and broad in proportion, the prospect of being forcibly cleaned by her, as if one were a doorstep or a kitchen table, was more alarming than alluring. Timidly I declined her services, and then, in one of the window-less cupboards that serve in Sweden for bath-rooms, I lowered myself into a couple of feet of hot water, closed my eyes and lay back exhausted. So this was Gothenburg !

II

Gothenburg in winter and Gothenburg in summer are two totally different places ; but

even in the summer months, when it is a veritable garden city and its broad, park-like avenues are gay with flowers and greenery, its appeal—to one stranger, at all events—is still more to the head than to the heart. It is clean, it is tidy, it is healthy and bright, it is a model of civic organisation; its inhabitants are well-educated, intelligent, just and honourable in their dealings, kind, hospitable; its climate is no worse than that of the East Coast of Scotland; its surroundings have a beauty of their own which for many people has an enduring charm and fascination. What, then, have I asked myself over and over again, is the “indefinable something” which (for me, at all events) it lacks? Charm is a quality which manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways and is always relative. One forms instinctive likings for people and for places which leave others cold; and people and places which touch the hearts of one’s friends leave one, in turn, cerebrally appreciative but emotionally unmoved. The heart has its own reasons. Nevertheless, if my respect for Gothenburg has not yet changed to a warmer emotion, I can state definitely that my liking for it has steadily and continuously increased. It is a town which “grows upon you,” as the saying is, and it takes a lot of knowing. When I first explored its broad, chill streets, with the collar of my coat turned up over my ears, and my face savaged by malicious snowflakes, I thought I had never set foot in a more detestable spot, nor in one which contrived to be at once so foreign and yet so depressingly familiar. Efficient-looking light-blue tramcars swept up and

down its unwelcoming boulevards. Efficient-looking business men, heavy with Nordic gravity if not with Nordic gloom, and sensible-looking women, women with no nonsense about them, paraded up and down the pavements. Large, characterless shops displayed in their windows sound and useful, but rather characterless, goods, marked at enormous prices. Policemen in dark-blue uniforms and bright brown boots, wearing a kind of cutlass hanging from their belts, waved white-gloved hands and encouraged the desultory traffic to proceed. There were a number of cinemas, but every one of them announced American films that were being shown in London when I left. I tottered back to my hotel, and in due course had luncheon, wrestled with a Swedish *smörgåsbord* in all its glory, after swallowing two glasses of fiery snaps which put some Dutch appetite into me, struggled more feebly with the hot dish that followed, drank some coffee and a glass of Swedish punch, and found myself, if not on good terms again with life, at all events disposed to sleep. Luckily, first impressions are frequently deceptive, and as the weeks went by the memory of my first day in Gothenburg became buried under others far more pleasant.

III

Gothenburg lies principally on the left bank of the deep and swift-flowing Götaälv about five miles from its mouth. Behind it, on either side of the river, rise low scantily-wooded hills, from which the bare rock constantly bursts out like a series of gigantic scabs. Everywhere, indeed,



THE GREAT HARBOUR CANAL, GOTHENBURG.

[Facing page 11.]

in the rather melancholy and monotonous country side these uncompromising lumps of rock protrude through the soil. Much of the town is built on a foundation of rock, and perhaps the rock has had its influence on the character of its inhabitants. Gothenburg is comparatively a modern city. It was founded in 1621, at the instigation of Gustavus Adolphus, by Dutch settlers, and was originally laid out on Dutch lines with artificial canals and an encircling moat. Later came German colonists and also a large influx of enterprising Scotchmen from the East Coast. At one time most of the wealth of the port was in German or Scottish hands, and such surnames as Dickson, Gibson, Seaton, Barclay, and Sinclair are still prominent. In the eighteenth century, many brave adventurers set sail from the Göta-elf to far distant parts of the earth. Charles XII, that incorrigible dreamer, even tried through his Foreign Minister, Baron Görtz, to organise an expedition from Gothenburg to attack the pirates of Madagascar, and seize that island from them ! There was a flourishing trade with the East Indies, a fact to which the old factory building of the East India Company in the Norrahamngatan—now converted into a museum—remains to bear witness. But the first great impetus to the commerce of Gothenburg was given by Napoleon's continental blockade in 1806. This made the port the principal dépôt of British trade with the north of Europe. The progress made by Gothenburg during the nineteenth century was steady and continuous. It became a commercial rival of Stockholm, and in

many ways has now outstripped the older city. Its second stroke of good fortune was the outbreak of the Great War. During the war years it enjoyed a hectic period of unexampled prosperity, and, as in other neutral countries, enormous fortunes were made. There followed the inevitable slump; but this seems to have had a valuable sobering effect, and I have been assured by many business people—and am also convinced by the evidence of my own eyes—that on the balance the town has increased in wealth and importance. Many private fortunes have been lost during the years following the peace, and many families once of great wealth have become impoverished. But in a number of cases these disasters have been the result of unwise speculations, based, in some cases, on the fact that Gothenburg as a whole, not unnaturally, backed the wrong horse during the war. I suppose it will please those who think in terms of “pro” and “anti” to know that Gothenburg is for the time being quite enthusiastically “pro-British.” Among the more cultivated people throughout Sweden, our literature and what may be generally termed our contribution to the sum-total of European culture has always, I believe, been generously appreciated, and I hope it always will be.

Gothenburg has increased rapidly in size during the past quarter of a century. It now contains nearly a quarter of a million inhabitants and is steadily growing. Most of the buildings of any architectural interest are quite modern, and are due to that wonderful renaissance of the art of

architecture which in the past decade has been so noticeable in Sweden and in Denmark, and of which Ragnar Östberg's new Stadshus at Stockholm is the most familiar example.

The most ambitious and original building in Gothenburg is the new Art Gallery, opened to the public in the present year (1925). Opinion is sharply divided as to its merits, and the seven tall round arches of its vast loggia are popularly known as the "seven long yawns." I began by disliking it, but after having lived in close proximity to it for several months my opinion has begun to change. When the whole plan is carried out and the buildings designed to flank the Gallery have been erected, it may well be that Gothenburg will possess a masterpiece of modern architecture. At all events, it will either prove a great triumph or a great failure. Another fine modern building is the new General Post Office. There is also a church overlooking the river, in the suburb of Majorna, whose high red-brick tower forms a landmark for the ships approaching the port, which has some distinction. But it is by no means unlikely that the chief architectural glories of Gothenburg have still to be erected and that in another two centuries it may come to be regarded as one of the finest cities in the North of Europe. It is remarkable what its people have accomplished in a few generations, and the public spirit of its wealthy families must be almost unexampled. Never have I seen in a town of similar size such a number of recently-established scholastic institutions, technical colleges and the like. Nearly

all of them have been founded and endowed by the merchant princes of the town, many of whom, like the great majority of their fellow-citizens, were the sons or grandsons of simple peasants. It is natural that they should regard the furtherance of education as the greatest benefit they could confer on their fellows, for it is largely to the efficient and democratic educational system, which has long been in force in Sweden, that they owed their own prosperity and that the town as a whole owes its present wealth and importance. Of an aristocracy, in the accepted sense—or rather of an aristocracy sufficiently powerful to set the tone of social life—Gothenburg, it is true, cannot boast. The lack of it may make the atmosphere of the place a little insipid and provincial; may account, in part, for the excessive formality and the slavery to convention that is so much more noticeable in Gothenburg than in Stockholm. It may also account for the prevalent lack of detachment from a material and commercial standard of values, a lack of detachment which may be found even in the schools and colleges, and existing both among the teachers and the taught. But when all is said, it is better to be an ancestor than a descendant; and I have been in few towns which have impressed me so strongly as having a great future before them as Gothenburg.

IV

Sweden is not a cheap country to live in, and Englishmen with small incomes, who have not trained themselves to eschew tobacco and abjure

alcohol, will find that a sovereign in Sweden does not go further than twelve and sixpence in England. The Virginia cigarette to which most of us are addicted, and for which we pay what is in reality the scandalous price of sixpence for a packet of ten, costs the equivalent of 1s. 2d. for ten in Sweden. Shoes and most articles of clothing are dearer than in England. Postage is more expensive. While a letter can be sent from England to Sweden for 2½d., the reply costs 3½d. Even paper, one of the staple industries of the country, costs about double the English price. For a writing-block of Swedish paper which would cost 1s. 3d. in England I have paid the equivalent of 2s. 6d. in Gothenburg. A simple "hair-cut" costs half a crown, without the tip. The average cost of furnished rooms and of meals is not much higher than in London, but woebetide the Englishman who essays to purchase a casual drink! To start with, he is charged a tax varying from 1s. 2d. to 1s. 8d. for a mythical sandwich which is rarely set before him. He is then served with an ordinary double whisky for which he has to pay from one and eight to half a crown, and a bottle of soda-water for which he is charged sixpence. Thus, by the time he has tipped the waiter he will find himself out of pocket to the extent of nearly five shillings for a modest quencher which in London would cost him one and fivepence. This, despite the fact that purchased by the bottle whisky is slightly cheaper than in England. Much has been written about the "Gothenburg System" of controlling the public consumption of alcohol. Able members of the British Labour

Party have come from England expressly to study it, and have been deeply impressed by its virtues. English teetotallers ; others who, without holding views on the subject, rarely drink ; and others again whose notions do not rise beyond a pint of beer at the mid-day meal and a glass of port at a wedding or a funeral, have been loud in its praises and have expressed their desire to see the system adopted in England. Theoretically, no doubt, there is much to be said for it, and in practice it may, on the whole, be a good thing for Sweden. But that it could be transplanted to the advantage of Great Britain I do not for one moment believe. Before the introduction of the System Sweden was one of the hardest-drinking countries in Europe, and Gothenburg one of the hardest-drinking towns in Sweden. Now conditions are normal, and Gothenburg " controlled " probably does not consume more alcohol than an English city of the same size. But the kind of alcohol it consumes is, I fancy, more pernicious than the kind consumed in England, and it should be noted that the System has made no attempt whatever to use its powers to induce healthier drinking habits in the Swedish people. Swedish punch and aquavit (about 80 per cent. alcohol) are the drinks which are cheapest and most readily obtainable. No beer is brewed containing more than about 2 per cent. alcohol, nor is any allowed to be imported. The finest lager beer in the world is made near Copenhagen, and it has sufficient body in it to make it a satisfying drink. If it became popular in Sweden there is little doubt that the consumption of spirits would

decrease. Again, there is the question of wines. If it is sincerely the intention of the organisers of the System to correct the alcoholic tendencies of the Swedes by weaning them from "strong waters," how is it that the sale of wine is not encouraged? There is no reason whatever, that I can see, why a bottle of ordinary red or white Bordeaux, costing but a few pence in the country of origin, should be retailed at four or five shillings a bottle in Sweden. Wines, not of a very good quality, are, it is true, easy to be had, but their price at a restaurant is so ridiculously excessive that the poor man who "wants a drink" naturally chooses with his meal the "snaps" and punch to which he is accustomed. The stranger, for similar reasons, follows suit.

The family liquor ration of everyone in Sweden is controlled by the System and every adult can obtain a "*motbok*" or book of coupons. So much spirit is allowed, per head, each month. Usually the ration is four litres for a married man and two litres for a bachelor. The *motbok* constitutes a drink licence, and since it is issued by the State it can be withdrawn by the State. Non-payment of taxes, convictions for drunkenness and other misdemeanours result, very promptly, in the withdrawal of the *motbok*. When a national strike or lock-out occurs, the System can stop the sale of drink altogether throughout the country. This has happened at least once in recent years. In the spring of 1925, when there were grave industrial troubles in Gothenburg, the townspeople were terror-stricken lest these drastic measures might again be put

into force, and for days the distributing offices for liquor were besieged by people endeavouring to draw their permitted monthly rations while there was still time ! It will be seen at once what a powerful instrument the Gothenburg System might be, in the hands of a Labour, or any other, Government. As a political device it is undoubtedly both ingenious and effective. But as a measure designed to change radically the alcoholic habits of the Swedish people I shall only believe in it when the poor are encouraged, by a proper adjustment of prices, to avoid spirits and to save their money by drinking good beer and sound wines. As things stand, the Swedish punch and snaps manufacturers and the Scotch whisky distillers have nothing to complain of, for the "system" is their staunch ally.

V

Food, and how to cook it and serve it, is a subject which, I imagine, every Swedish housewife understands thoroughly. If the Swedes could only make up their minds *when to eat it*, they would be doing both themselves and their visitors a service. As things are, chaos reigns supreme, and as a result, in one of the most important of the minor arts of life, Sweden—so advanced and progressive in other ways—is still in the dark ages, as compared with Western Europe. The Swedish breakfast is, as a rule, substantial and in accordance with the occupation of the breadwinner, it varies in time between 8.0 and 12.0. Lunch may be at any hour between 12.0 and 3.0 p.m., and may consist of a light

meal with tea, or of a heavy meal with the usual alcoholic accompaniments. Dinner is at any time from 3.0 p.m. until 7.0 p.m., according to the social standing of the household—the richest people usually dining at the later hour. Supper takes place at any moment between 7.0 p.m. and midnight. It will be easily understood from this that the unfortunate kitchen staff of a restaurant are only encouraged to display their talents when a meal is ordered some time in advance. The Swedes are lavish and most pains-taking hosts, so that when they entertain at a restaurant they usually take these preliminary precautions. Travellers, however, and other homeless people who take their chance usually fare rather badly.

The foreigner of a sociable disposition who makes friends and is invited into Swedish homes often finds, at the end of a few months, that the subject of his digestion is one which causes him the most painful and agitated reflection. In no two houses is the dinner-hour the same. To-day he dines at 3.0, to-morrow at 6.30, the day after at 5.0. The day after that he may have an invitation to drop in to tea at 8.0, and unless he is familiar with the ways of the household, he will have no means of telling whether he will be offered a cup of tea and a few biscuits, or whether he will find himself confronted with a quite large and sumptuous meal, with snaps and pilsner and wine, followed by punch and whisky. The only difference between this kind of “tea” and “supper” that I have been able to discover is that tea instead of coffee is taken after it. This

uncertainty and confusion is as trying for the hostess as for the guest. She may either have the mortification of watching the visitor stealthily emptying the biscuit-tray, or else she may see her carefully-prepared dishes scarcely touched. To return for a moment to the restaurants, it will be obvious that as food must be available from 11.0 in the morning until nearly midnight, the famous Swedish *smörgåsbord*, or cold table, has a very important rôle to play. In private houses the *smörgåsbord* is going out of fashion, but until something approaching uniformity in the hours of meals has been arrived at, the hotels and restaurants will never be able to dispense with it. For the *smörgåsbord*, and the "snaps" and pilsner which accompany it, keep the customer fully occupied until the kitchen staff has had time to prepare the warm dishes which are to follow. (The unwary stranger is often kept so well-occupied by it that he is unable to look on further food for many hours.) It is certainly a remarkable phenomenon. It stands usually in the middle of the restaurant and the number and variety of the dishes which comprise it are positively bewildering. Always there are several dishes of *sill*, slices of herring in sweetened vinegar, flavoured with onion and spices—the great national delicacy with which all Swedes like to begin their meals. In addition there are usually three or four kinds of cheese, a number of egg dishes, four or five kinds of cold meats, a variety of sausages, cold fried fish of various sorts, gherkins, cucumber, sliced beetroot, cold stewed prunes, Swedish caviare, fish in aspic,

pâté and other delicacies too numerous to be mentioned in detail. On arrival in a restaurant one walks to the *smörgasbord*, takes a plate, and a knife and fork from the table and after helping oneself to butter and to pieces of some of the many kinds of bread and hard biscuit which are always available, one proceeds to fill the plate as full as it will hold. Fish, cheese, meat, eggs, tomatoes, cucumbers—all get mixed up indiscriminately. There is no recognised order in which the dishes should be eaten except that a Swede almost invariably starts off with *sill*. This he regards as a necessary foundation for his “snaps,” which, after bowing and saying “Skål” to whoever he happens to be with, he swallows at a gulp and promptly chases with a draught of pilsner. I cannot believe that “snaps,” which is pure alcohol flavoured with carraway and slightly diluted, can be conducive to longevity; but it is certainly a grateful and comforting appetiser, infinitely better in this respect than any cocktail I have yet encountered. It is a clean drink, and much the pleasantest form of alcoholic liquor that Sweden manufactures. Of Swedish punch I cannot speak with similar enthusiasm. Before I came to Sweden, Norman Douglas, pre-eminently a judge in such matters, wrote to warn me to “beware of Swedish punch. It is based on *arrack* and is pleasant but *malicious*.” His warning I can but repeat. I would not go so far as to describe it, as some do, as a mixture of treacle and methylated spirits, but certainly its effect upon an unaccustomed stomach is not pleasing; while the headache it produces,

even if taken in what a Swede would regard as moderate doses, is in a class by itself. Sweden still has its "three-bottle" punch drinkers, and to see a collection of them, all seriously imbibing, is one of the world's most desolating spectacles. Tongues are not loosened by punch, nor is the brain illuminated nor the heart warmed. All that seems to happen to the drinker is that successive waves of Nordic gloom are liberated in him, until he becomes choked with a melancholy pomposity and a sort of graveyard self-importance. Excessive gravity, even at times of the strictest sobriety, seems to be one of the besetting weaknesses of the average Gothenburger. He very often cannot lay it aside, even when he wants to, with the result that social occasions often seem almost funereal in their ceremoniousness to visitors from more informal lands. There is, to our eyes, a great deal of formality about even the simplest Swedish dinner-party, and the rules of correct behaviour are positively bewildering in their complication. Nervous people who, like myself, have a natural gift for making floaters, will find abundant opportunities in Gothenburg for exercising their talents. For the making of the sort of *gaffe* which haunts its innocent perpetrator at the dead of night, and turns the darkness crimson with his blushes, social life in Gothenburg offers unimaginable facilities. I remember a tragic occasion in my early days in Gothenburg when I was invited to a supper at an exceptionally charming house. My host was by no means a typical Gothenburger of the kind which I have been describing. All

the same, in his house the formalities were of necessity observed. I had my rules in my pocket and hoped that all would be well. At the opening of the meal—it was a men's party—my neighbour on my left lifted his glass of snaps, said "*Skål*" to me and drank. So far so good. Our sandwiches were cleared away; decanters of excellent Burgundy were produced; our glasses were filled and there was served a kind of fish *mousse*, in pastry, for which experts must find a name. All that I can say is that in my gastronomical experience it was one of the most delicate and delicious works of art that I have yet encountered. My neighbour and I had been talking continuously, my heart glowed with kindly and beneficent emotions and feeling that he must wish to taste his Burgundy, I raised my glass to him. His eye froze me to the marrow of my being. Then, gazing down the long table, I saw a double row of untouched glasses and of anguished faces. I shrank, horrified, into immobility and my palsied hand with difficulty put down the wine without spilling it. Silence fell. At last my host, who was sitting on my right, tapped his glass with a fork. Angels hovered over us during the unearthly hush. Then he rose and uttered words which, though they may have been well-chosen, were certainly not few. First, in Swedish, he expressed his pleasure to be able to entertain in his humble home the guest upon his right. He enlarged upon the virtues of this guest, his public spirit, his distinction, his valuable services to the town. He then turned to the other guest of the evening, myself, and welcomed me in the

kindest phrases to Gothenburg and to his house. And all the while the fish *mousse*, that masterpiece of culinary art, grew colder and yet more cold. He sat down and then the first guest rose and expressed his joy at being in such a charming house, his pleasurable anticipations of what he was about to receive, his general satisfaction at the whole proceedings. Luckily, since my host and hostess were people of exceptional tact, on that occasion I was quietly excused from my share of the speech-making. Someone said "Skål" to his vis-à-vis and the meal proceeded.

At a Swedish dinner no one is supposed to drink without toasting somebody, and no woman may drink of her own initiative and without being invited to do so by a guest. It is not etiquette to say "Skål" to one's hostess. If it were, the poor dear would of course be under the table long before the meal was over. After dinner, host and hostess take up their position in the room where the coffee and the cognac is served, and the guests all solemnly shake them by the hand and say, "*Tack for maten*," thank you for the food. When a Swede is introduced he makes two quick bows, quite impossible for the foreigner to imitate. Hats are doffed when entering a shop and, indeed, whenever there is the faintest excuse for doing so. I have seen a Swede pass another, remember two minutes too late and after turning a corner that it was someone he knew, and proceed to go through the grave gesture of taking off his hat and holding it outstretched for thirty seconds, quite regardless of the fact that his acquaintance was in another

street and could not possibly see him. Intimate friends, I believe, do not uncover when they meet. It would be possible to fill many pages with a detailed description of Swedish etiquette and manners, without exhausting the subject. Generally speaking, they are of a kind that can be learnt out of a book : they are just as unsubtle as that. There appear to be rules for everything. In fact the great difference between England and Sweden in this matter is that the Swedes have rules of conduct while we prefer to rely on principles of behaviour. Perhaps the real reason for what strikes the foreigner as being the excessive and even painful formality of Gothenburg society is to be found in the fact that the people, for the most part, have not possessed wealth for a sufficient number of generations to give them enough assurance to discard their rules. For example, their stern defences against showing undue eagerness for food and drink suggest the peasant who is resolutely upon his best behaviour. A leading hostess in Gothenburg, not a native of the town, told me once how difficult she found it to get her guests to move into the dining-room. When the meal was announced they all affected not to have heard ; and continued talking resolutely on topics of general interest, as though the idea of food was the very last thing to enter their heads. Finally the principal guests had almost to be dragged to the table.

For those subtleties of consideration, tact and so forth which make up the Englishman's idea of what constitutes genuine good manners, I cannot say that the majority of Swedes I have

met have been especially notable. They are far more "polite" than we are; but a Swede, after a short acquaintance, will ask one personal questions of a kind so intimate as to make one gasp in sheer amazement. Among the prettiest Swedish customs that I have noted is the habit of giving flowers on a birthday or family occasion; or by way of saying "thank you," after a meal. The Swedes adore flowers, and vases of cut flowers are to be found even in the humblest homes. In May, in the early days of the sudden, almost miraculous Swedish spring, the people of Gothenburg troop out on Sundays to the little town of Kung-älv to see the apple-blossom and gaze at it in sheer ecstasy. It is the sign that the winter is over at last and that the joys of summer—the boating and bathing and the long bright days—are close at hand.

VI

On my return to Sweden, after a summer vacation in London, I came direct to Gothenburg from Tilbury in one of the Swedish-Lloyd Company's boats, the *Saga*, and I can recommend this route to all save exceptionally bad sailors. There is a special train from St. Pancras to Tilbury in connection with the boats, and there is no doubt that an infinity of trouble is saved by travelling to Sweden by sea. Not only is the tedium of long train journeys and the crossing of frontiers avoided, but the voyage itself may be a very pleasant experience. The boats are well found and comfortable, and the meals excellent. I had often seen the *Saga* and her sister-ship the

Patricia lying at anchor in the Götaälv and had developed a queer affection for them. At homesick moments it was pleasant to look at a ship which in a few days' time would be steaming up the Thames. Many English people whose business brings them often to Sweden know these boats almost as well as they know their own homes. We were quite a jolly party on board the *Saga*, whose genial skipper seemed to have a special knack for making things go. Unfortunately the North Sea did not behave itself as well as it might have done, with the result that the attendance at meals on the second day out was rather scanty. The morning of our arrival off the Swedish coast was fine and sunny; and I got up early, in time to watch the vessel threading her way through the rocky archipelago at the mouth of the Götaälv. These strange islands, known as the Skärgård, many of which are mere lumps of forbidding rock without a blade of grass upon them, stretch right up the coast as far as Norway. There is, I believe, nothing else in Europe quite like them. In winter and on grey and wet days they look indescribably repulsive and melancholy. But in the summer sunshine, when the sea is deepest azure and the waves encircle them with glittering snow-white foam, they have a romantic fascination which is peculiarly their own. The inhabitants of Gothenburg, who have a passion for sailing as well as for bathing, alternately in the sea and in the sun, adore them; and English yachtsmen are also beginning to realise their charm. It is the custom in the summer for parties of young people of both sexes to sail out to one or

other of the innumerable islands, with supplies of food and drink, and spend all day in a state of nature. The rock of which the islands are composed retains the sun's heat and thus renders them admirably adapted for sun-bathing. And as the surrounding water is very deep the islands afford excellent opportunities for diving and swimming.

The approach to Gothenburg from the sea is singularly beautiful in fine weather. The first object that comes into view after passing the islands is the tall tower of the Masthuggs Kyrka at Majorna; and then as the steamer draws nearer to her moorings the whole panorama of the busy port, crowded with shipping, with enormous floating docks and shipbuilding yards on one hand, and the towers and buildings of the town on the other, stretches out before one in all its splendour. The very heart of Gothenburg is its port, and I have never tired of walking along the quays, watching the fishing-boats come puffing up the river with the aid of their auxiliary engines, and the busy little passenger-steamers, engaged in maintaining communication between Gothenburg and the islands of the Skärgård, darting to and fro among the heavy cargo-boats.

Among Gothenburg's greatest natural attractions are the beauty of its skies and the exquisite loveliness of its sunsets. From some point of vantage such as the summit of Keiller's Park on the right bank of the river, the view on a fine evening in summer when the sun has just gone down, can hardly be surpassed. The whole sky is brilliant with colour, with expanses of purple



GENERAL VIEW OF THE HARBOUR, GOTHENBURG.

[Facing page 29.]

and fiery red and delicate mauve, and islands of rosy-tinted cloud, floating in the illimitable empyrean. Slowly the colours change, the shadows grow deeper. Afar in the distance, at the river's mouth, the rocky islets take on a shade of deepest blue and the sea surrounding them becomes a stretch of glittering silver. The blue darkens gradually, but the water still catches and reflects the sky's last, palest gleams of light. Meanwhile, the town has been illuminated and a myriad yellow points of fire sparkle and flicker all along the left bank of the river, as far as the eye can see. Gothenburg, for a moment, has clothed herself with romance, and the sight she now presents is scarcely less thrilling than that of Barcelona seen at nightfall from the heights of Tibidabo. She is transfigured, scarcely recognisable. One descends the rocky pathway on to the level, boards the ferry-boat and reaches Gothenburg's crowded central boulevard, the Östra Hamngatan. Here, alas, the glamour is gone. At night Gothenburg may be "good," but it is scarcely exciting. If a town exists in which it is possible to be more completely bored between dinner-time and bed I have yet to hear of it.

VII

Gothenburg possesses several theatres, it supports an admirable symphony orchestra, and it has at least a dozen cinemas—distraction enough, one would say, for a town of its size. Some friends of mine in London who take the art of the kinema seriously had congratulated me before my departure on going to a country where I

should be certain to see the best German and Swedish films, and should escape the flood of vulgar American films which is having such a poisonous effect upon the English masses. Alas, although I saw one first rate Swedish picture, and a rather disappointing German "release," the greater part of the programme at nearly all the picture theatres is taken up by American films, which are often of a character so nauseating that their toleration in a country which pays as much attention to popular education as Sweden seems astonishing. Nobody wishes to belittle what America has done in the production of films. She has given the world its first undoubted genius in kinema-acting, Charles Chaplin; she has given us the enchanting "Felix"; and she has sent to Europe a number of grandiose and highly-expensive productions, which besides being marvels of photography, have at least been respectable in thought and sentiment. So far, so good. Hats off to Hollywood! But, alas for Europe, together with these legitimate and desirable products of her industry, she has flooded countries with ancient civilisations, with centuries of culture behind them, with high ideals and a splendid national idiom, with films of a "morality" so contemptible and a propaganda tendency so crude and repugnant to the finer shades of European sentiment and feeling, that it is not exaggerating to describe them as a serious menace. The mass-mind throughout Europe is being gradually debauched by the "ideals" of Main Street, the "morality" of Dayton, Tennessee. By what financial methods the vast Hollywood

industry has been able to dominate the struggling film industries in European countries, I do not profess to know. Money talks, and no doubt it is easy to buy up competitors not yet firmly established. And, perhaps, European kinema "fans" must take a share of the blame. In the always well-written film notes in the *Manchester Guardian*, I recently came across the following significant passage: "The old Swedish kinema was world-famous and world-loved because it was so intensely Swedish. It began to despise itself and became of no account. Art and commerce, both international, can only flourish when their roots are stuck deep in native soil."

That the existing situation is worth the serious attention of all European governments, is a conviction which must be born in upon most intelligent people who have seen the type of film to which I am referring. That there exists in America a great body of cultivated opinion which would be wholly sympathetic to a concerted European movement to ban and reject undesirable American films, I do not doubt for a moment. One has only to read the articles in some such admirable periodical as *The Atlantic Monthly*, to realise that the best American thought is far more alive to the perils of the kinema and its debasing possibilities than we are ourselves. The home-made names of some of the less prominent stars, usually quite meaningless variations of English Christian names and surnames, are often nearly as irritating as their cretinous or almost criminal faces, while the hideous grimaces which I have occasionally seen upon these far from open

countenances would entitle the makers of them to be ejected at once from any decent European restaurant. That may be the way they "register" emotion in Main Street. Heaven forbid that it should ever be imitated elsewhere.

VIII

Among all the many peoples, personages, inventions and characteristics which authentically "won the war," I like to think that Cockney humour was conspicuous. For the Cockney is never more at his best than when he finds himself for the first time amid strange surroundings, nor is he ever more endearing to the heart than when, having to endure agonies of discomfort and danger he finds relief in his own inimitable brand of humour. The English residents in Sweden, other than those connected with the teaching profession, are nearly all engaged in mercantile pursuits. They represent engineering firms, paper merchants, coal merchants and such like trades, and range from impressive ambassadors of commerce of the ex-officer and public school type, to imperturbable Cockneys with bowler hats on the backs of their heads and the inevitable gasper depending from their lower lips. Since the business world is a *terra incognita* to me, I am not able to judge as to their efficiency in upholding Great Britain's commercial prestige. I have only come across them in their hours of relaxation, and a very amiable, simple-minded, adaptable and friendly group of people they are. But the more I see of the English business man the more I marvel at him. In some ways he seems too

innocent to live. One gazes at him with awe, with incredulity. Outside his own province, his lamb-like naïveté often passes belief. I have listened by the hour to business men, highly-skilled and expert in their own line, whose discourse on general topics is such a bewildering blend of the *Daily Mail* leader and the captions of American sob-stuff film drama, that one is struck dumb with wondering amazement. A more good-hearted collection of Englishmen, however, than those I have come across in Gothenburg and elsewhere it would be hard to discover. In the lower ranks of the commercial community there was one delightful figure whom I shall always remember with affection. I have never known his name, for he was always referred to by his employer as "our technical man." Our technical man had a pallid Cockney face, a small black moustache and humorous grey eyes. He was a solid, undiluted, intact and authentic bit of London, a living embodiment of the phrase "cœlum non animum mutant," and for a patriotic Londoner like myself to see him and to hear him was always a delight. He had to perfection the Cockney type of "silly" humour. The Swedish language, or such portions of it as appear on public notices, he gazed at with deep chuckles, and it afforded him endless opportunities for waggery. The words, "varm rätt" on the restaurant menus made him beam with joy. "At half these here restaurants they give you one warm rat and at the other half they give you two. But, bless me, after the *smörgåsbord* one of 'em's enough. Went for a walk in the country the

other day to a place called . . . Slop. What d'you think I saw? An 'all called Slopsblow-bandlocal. That's a good word, that is. Blow-band! Cornets and such like, I suppose?" (I forbore to destroy his illusions by suggesting that it might mean "Blue ribbon" temperance hall.) "But I'll tell you what beats the lot. In my hotel the other day I saw three doors. One had bad rum on it, the other dam rum, and the third, dam bad rum! Can you beat it? 'Nother thing I never can make out is this 'ere 'gods expedition.' All the railway stations have a room with it up on the door. Is it a sort of touring club like them Free Church blokes, or wot is it? Gods expedition! Why, I know—to the cemetery, of course! It's probably where they keep the corpses afore they plant 'em." Whenever I met him on a cold and snowy day, of which Gothenburg has its full share, he used to look with loathing at the surrounding scene, and remark, "I don't mind telling *you*, Mr. Goldring, that if this goes on, it's me for gods expedition!" All the supposedly-celestial activities delighted him—"Ilgods," "resgods," "gods emottages," and above all, "gods magasin." "Gods magazine" provoked him to flights of mirth. (I think he never discovered that the word "gods," in Swedish, is pronounced "goods.") Again, he could never get over having to buy his socks and neckties at shops labelled "herrings and kipperings" (herrekipering), and there were certain other common Swedish words, indelicate to English ears, which evoked in him paroxysms of laughter.

"Our technical man," in addition to his other qualifications, had, I believe, considerable skill in

ingratiating himself with the affectionate *frökens* of the town. How he managed it, I cannot think, for nature had not favoured him in the matter of looks and his Swedish was peculiar, and anything but extensive. Perhaps his Cockney geniality in some way got across the language barrier, and I expect he had unlimited cheek. He was a strange specimen of a ruling race. But I could easily imagine him starting off to traverse the Sahara with his bowler on the back of his head, his hands in his pockets, and his half-smoked "Golf Flake" hanging from his lower lip. Only London was actual to him; the rest of the world wasn't really true, it was just a joke.

IX

These are not my own opinions or conclusions, but I put them down just as they were given to me, in the café of one of the Gothenburg hotels, by a compatriot whose acquaintance with Sweden exceeds my own in length of time by several years. The band had just played for the fourth time, in a period of an hour and a half, a fox-trot called, "Je cherche après Titine"; and I was feeling melancholy. The surroundings, quite agreeable in their way, suggested Leeds or Manchester—perhaps because the northern English accent was audible all round us. Numbers of fat, bald-headed, serious men were sitting about, smoking large cigars. The *Daily Mail* was visible here and there. Taken as a whole, it was just a collection of prosperous and well-fed business men, sitting in an hotel lounge digesting their dinners. Not a very inspiring sight! But to come in here and look at them and have a drink and listen to

the band was "what one did in the evening." For the unmarried exile in Gothenburg there is very little else to do.

"You mustn't judge Sweden by Gothenburg," said my friend, "any more than you must judge England by Hull or by Croydon. It is purely and simply a business community. In Stockholm they call it 'little London.' As you have probably guessed already, there isn't much love lost between the two towns. To a certain extent it is true to say that Stockholm has most of the culture as well as most of the wealth in Sweden, and that Gothenburg is hard-working and middle-class. Stockholm has, of course, all the advantages of a capital and its life is more free-and-easy and the arts are practised there as well as appreciated. But the general level of what, for want of a better name, one calls 'culture' is high throughout Sweden, and particularly high here in Gothenburg. The Swedish business man is many-sided compared with his English confrère. After all, outside his business, what does the average prosperous English business man care about or take an interest in? He plays golf, enjoys his food and drink, and his modicum of vice—the pretty typist or chorus-girl with whom he slips off to Brighton occasionally for the weekend. And he likes to be a respected and respectable personage in his particular suburb, and to have a wife and children who add to his complacency and self-importance. But when you have said that much, you have said everything. Because he goes to an office and sells things at a higher price than he paid for them, he feels that



STATUE OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS, FOUNDER OF GOTHENBURG.

[Facing page 37.]

he is part of the 'backbone of the country,' and fully competent, given a chance, to guide its destinies. Actually his idea of politics consists in a few catch-phrases such as 'Hats off to Poincaré,' or 'bloodthirsty Bolshevists.' Of art and literature—mind, I am speaking only of the average man—he is not only hoggishly ignorant, but in this ignorance he takes a positive pride and despises everyone, including his own son or daughter, who is not as ignorant as he. A knowledge of foreign languages, even, he usually considers beneath him and leaves to paid subordinates. The Swedish business man, on the other hand, is quite often a man with a large number of intellectual interests. He is generally conversant with at least three foreign languages; he is often very musical; and he at least respects the arts, even if he does not understand them. He and his wife and family make their home as beautiful and attractive as they know how. The general level of taste in Sweden has much improved during the last ten years, and as for architecture, you can see for yourself how very pleasant and sometimes really beautiful are the new houses and public buildings in this town. The Gothenburger is full of civic pride and public spirit. I doubt if there is to be found in Europe a more efficiently-run town than this is. Their fire brigade, perhaps, needs overhauling and gingering up a bit; but on the æsthetic side the municipal authorities seem to me to be beyond praise. I know nowhere where the public gardens are better kept. By the end of May the place becomes a city of flowers and greenery, as

delightful as care and skill and lavish expenditure can possibly make it. And all the year round the streets are clean and tidy. All this shows that the Gothenburg 'business man' has ideas outside his business and his 'pleasures.' Of course he is complacent and pleased with himself. That goes without saying. But he has at least a certain excuse for his complacency. Oh, yes, it is dull enough! . . . It is a pity that the seven deadly virtues are not cosier and more companionable; but you can't have things both ways. The Swedes have the defects of their qualities. They can't be blamed for their frigidity and lack of temperament, that is probably the fault of the climate. As a result, they express themselves in engineering, in architecture, and in science and haven't, as a rule, the necessary warmth to be creative in the arts of literature or painting. But there is a vein of mysticism in the people in the more distant parts of Sweden, which is to be expected from those who inhabit an enormous lonely land, a land of forests and lakes and low rocky hills. Do you realise, by the way, that it is as long a journey from here to the north of Sweden as it is from here to Rome? Gothenburg is largely materialist and agnostic; but in the heart of Sweden—in Värmland, for example, Selma Lagerlöf's country—there is a simplicity and charm about the life and outlook of the people which is the reverse of materialistic. Gothenburg though in many ways still mid-Victorian, is ultra-modern in others. But the Swedes, as a whole, have been living in Sweden for five thousand years or more, and as the kingdom has a continu-

ous history of about 1,200 years, Sweden is the oldest existing State in Europe to-day. To get the 'flavour' of its incredibly ancient traditions, to see something of the real Sweden, you ought to go to Dalarna and Värmland. And, of course, you should go to the island of Gotland and see Visby. And you should go and see Uppsala. It's a dour sort of university town, to our way of thinking, but it is very Swedish, and it has been the headquarters of Swedish scholarship and learning for about five hundred years. In Sweden you will find plenty of that 'indefinable something' the absence of which, in Gothenburg, you were just now deploring, if you look for it in the right places. . . ." For the sixth time the band started, "*Je cherche après Titine*," and I felt suddenly overcome by a kind of "Oh-my-God!" feeling which left me for an instant speechless. I had a sudden ache for a dirty little Italian fishing village of my acquaintance—all smells and dirt, unhealthy, insanitary, deficient in virtue, defective in culture. Santa Margharita! Ah, lovely-sounding name! Its colours and its stinks, the primitive gaudiness of its little church that smelled so of stale incense, its blue sea, its smiling faces, its long, tunnel-like main street bright with fruit-shops and wine-shops and full of chattering people; its little dark *caffès*, the grandiose mountains at the back of it, and the lemon-groves and the olive-trees on their lower slopes—all these came and flooded my memory and gave me an ache at the heart that no appreciation of the propriety, cleanliness and civic virtue of the town which had received me so hospitably could

alleviate. And yet. . . . One does not really have to be much of a philosopher to realise that much of the art of life consists in the power—and the will—to appreciate what one has rather than to bewail the fact that it is not something else. In Gothenburg there is much to appreciate : and for the groans of some of my compatriots—who, at all events since the ending of the war, have found nothing but kindness and hospitality in the country which also feeds and clothes them—I have scant sympathy. There are, of course, things about Gothenburg which, from a purely selfish and personal standpoint, I could wish were different. I wish the restaurants weren't all so characterless, uniform and "controlled"; and that all the meals in them weren't always the same (although called by different names). And I wish the Swedes hadn't that blind horror of the open window which fills their sanatoria with consumptives. And they might be silly sometimes, just for a lark. And I *do* wish they would refrain from taxing the harmless and nourishing oyster out of existence. (There is, I believe, a tax of sixpence a shell on imported oysters.) And, above all, they *might* find it in their hearts to cherish an occasional cat! I have lived in Gothenburg for six months without seeing a single cat of any sort or kind, and only those who share my passion for pussy will appreciate what this deprivation means. But when all is said, Gothenburg has a great deal to recommend it. In certain important respects it far surpasses any town of its size that I have ever seen. And its children are altogether enchanting. A jollier,

better-behaved, better-looking collection of small boys and girls it would be hard to find anywhere in the world. The look of the children, their brightness and intelligence, their good health and their good manners, reflects the greatest possible credit on the Swedes in general, as parents, and on the Swedish mother in particular.

X

On my way home, as I sat in the train en route for Oslo (for I was returning by the famous Oslo-Bergen railway, and thence by the s.s. *Jupiter* to Newcastle), I began to think once more about the city I was leaving, and to try to get my impressions a little clearer. The longer one stays in a town the more one's impressions tend to lose their hardness of outline, and the more carefully and dubiously does one generalise. The first point which occurred to me was the real kindness of the people among whom I had been living, and the charm and sweetness of their family life. In Gothenburg sons and daughters seem for the most part to be genuinely attached to their parents, and the parents to their children and to each other. This lends the Gothenburg homes a very pleasant atmosphere of general cordiality, and it may be in part an explanation of or contributory cause to the enormous amount of hard work which the Gothenburgers get through. In Gothenburg almost everybody works—ceaselessly, relentlessly. Nothing is scamped. It is the same with hospitality. Even afternoon tea is prepared for in advance, thought out thoroughly, and made as gastronomically agree-

able as the host or hostess can contrive. This has its advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages are that there is very little "dropping in" in Gothenburg, and it is a slow process to make friends because you cannot visit the people you know, without being offered an elaborate meal and hospitality on a scale which it is altogether beyond the capacities of the average homeless stranger to return. Again the *tête-à-tête* meals which Londoners so much enjoy, because they enable them to get a little below the surface with one another, are scarcely understood, and not at all in vogue. A man you have got to know and begun to like would think it rude if he invited you to his flat without inviting a party of other people as well. This multiplies the number of one's casual acquaintances (and also the number of times one has to take off one's hat in the streets) without getting one any further. Indeed, it is only too easy in Gothenburg to collect a horde of acquaintances; it is not so easy to make friends. In this matter I imagine that Gothenburg differs very greatly from Stockholm, which has rather more metropolitan ease and informality. The Swedes are, I believe, not very good psychologists; and their special gifts, which are many, are for the most part not of the imaginative order. They are immensely "thorough"; and they plan their business undertakings and their public buildings on a scale so grandiose that it would seem to belie what I have just said about their lack of imagination. I don't think it really belies it. Their love of "grandiosity" has something rather American about it,

and is expressive of swelling pride and self-confidence. The Swede rather likes to dwell upon the vast cost of his new buildings or undertakings, and will speak, quite in an American way, about "our new twenty million kronor motor ship, the *Gripsholm*." I have spoken elsewhere about the prevalence of American films in Gothenburg, and I should hazard the opinion that the influence of American ideas, both those of cultured America and still more those of "Main Street," is the strongest of all outside influences upon the mentality of Gothenburg, though on the surface it might seem that the influence of English thought is the prevailing one. I fancy there is a general impression in Gothenburg that England will certainly be relegated to a back seat among the great English-speaking peoples within a generation. The lack of adaptability on the part of English business people is often referred to in Sweden. London goods are popular, and much-esteemed, and would be much more widely bought but for the fact that England, almost alone among the great European countries, has not made any arrangement with the Swedish post-office authorities for the payment of goods on delivery. If a Swedish lady orders something from the catalogue of a London firm the first thing she receives is a bill, which she must pay before the goods are dispatched. If she buys from other countries she pays for her goods, which are despatched immediately, when they arrive. It follows from this that she is practically driven to buy in Paris or Berlin goods which she would much prefer to purchase in London. It is such

small points as this, coupled with the natural tendency of the English, both in their newspapers and in their conversation, to take the gloomiest views about the future of their country, which convince the Swedes that England is at last breaking up and going under. They cannot, of course, be expected to understand that, without being bigger liars than our neighbours, we have a habit of saying the opposite of what we really mean, and then of expecting to be understood perfectly ; or that, with us, the natural human tendency to exaggerate takes the inverted form of excessive self-depreciation. I always fail to get my Swedish friends to realise that England has been continuously "going to the dogs," or "hovering on the brink of ruin," ever since she began to be a nation. The conviction of so many Swedish business people that England is rapidly slipping down hill has done more to restore my equanimity about my country than anything I have seen in any newspaper. For, without disrespect to the Swedish business community—my belief applies equally to all business men in all countries—I have been forced during the past ten years to the conviction that of all prophets of the political future the business man is the most completely untrustworthy. The "responsible business man," who pronounces about what is going to happen, is listened to with open-mouthed attention, alike by the unbusinesslike and the irresponsible, and by his fellow pillars of the state. And how often is he worth listening to ? Nine times out of ten his sonorous pronouncements are in truth the greatest folly, based on

psychological obtuseness, lack of imagination and misinformation derived from a hasty survey of the tendencious and unreliable newspapers which are invariably the ones by which he chooses to be influenced. The most crack-brained poet or romancer, or foreign correspondent of a newspaper, who is blessed with a little imagination and some knowledge of history and a dash of psychological perception is, I am convinced, far more likely to be right than a "captain of industry." For this reason even when an exceptionally intelligent, cultivated and well-educated business community as is that of Gothenburg arrives at a conclusion as to what is likely to happen to England during the years of peace which we trust lie ahead of us, I am prepared to lay my money on it, that it will prove as hopelessly wrong and at fault as did the conclusion it arrived at during the war from which we have recently emerged.

It would be most ungallant to write of a city without saying something about the opposite sex, and, indeed, the girls and the married women and mothers of Gothenburg deserve at least a chapter from the pen of an admiring foreigner. The Swedes of both sexes are a handsome, fresh-complexioned, finely-built people, but on the whole the palm for beauty must be conferred upon the females of the race. I know few cities where one can see so many pretty young women walking in the streets as one sees in the streets of Gothenburg. As a rule the Gothenburg girls, whether fair or dark, have clear, bright eyes and ravishing complexions. My personal acquaintance with them is too limited to enable me to generalise

with much conviction, but so far as I have been able to judge they are equable and affectionate in disposition and combine a Victorian conventionality of outlook, with the English and American point of view about going to work and earning the money to pay, at least, for their own clothes. They are indefatigable workers, and at the same time know all the arts of the housewife. They certainly make admirable wives and mothers. I imagine that there is nothing of the spirit of "la garçonne" about them, nor has the English idea of equal comradeship yet reached the Swedish *fröken*. They are charmingly frank and free, in their depredations on the male pocket ; but as a result of this they have not yet gained that freedom and equality with the male, and that proud self-respect and self-reliance which has been fought for and won by their English sisters. In social life the rule is "ladies last," and the lord and master is kept always well in the foreground. The spectacle of a Frenchman or an Englishman trying with difficulty to avoid preceding his hostess through a door is a common sight in Gothenburg homes. I mention these small points of difference merely because they are differences, and not in any sense because I consider the habits and customs of my own country are any better than those of any other. Indeed, in many points of prime importance Sweden is far ahead of England. For example, Divorce Laws in Sweden, unlike our own, are humane and reasonable. There are no trials and there is no publicity. The disgusting publicity given to divorce cases in the English press is very naturally regarded in



OLD CHURCH AT ÖRGRYTE, NEAR GOTHENBURG.

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Sweden with amazement and with horror, as well it deserves to be. In all such matters as hospitals, prisons, homes for the incurable and for cripples, poor law relief and so on, Sweden, coming late in the field, has been able to benefit by and improve on the results of the pioneer work in other countries—to her own great advantage. All these necessary public services are admirably organised and conducted, under state control. Street begging is rare in Sweden, nor does one ever see in Sweden the ragged urchins and dilapidated, half-starved and wretched-looking people who infest the streets of all our towns in England, and form so menacing a contrast to the excessive wealth which is equally apparent. Sweden is fortunate in not possessing these dangerous extremes of wealth and poverty. The general level of prosperity is far higher in Sweden than in England, and certainly as regards the material necessities of life the Swedish working classes are infinitely better off than our own.

Gothenburg prides itself on being “very well-dressed,” a claim which seems rather astonishing to the foreigner until he realises that the Swedish conception of what constitutes being well-dressed differs entirely from that of the Londoner or the Parisian. In Gothenburg everyone you meet, irrespective of sex or class, wears well-brushed, clean and expensive-looking clothes which indicate prosperity and self-respect. Shabbiness is looked upon with real horror and gives genuine offence. The fantastic depths of shabbiness in which an English duke, an Oxford don or indolent Etonian may, and often does, indulge himself, would be

a really dreadful revelation to the Swedish eye, nor could one persuade a Swede that such people really dress appropriately because their costume expresses their personality and temperament. The clothes of Gothenburg people are an expression of their sense of what is required of them, of respectability and prosperity, but they are not, as a rule, an expression either of personal taste or personal idiosyncrasy. Hence, though there is no shabbiness there is also no style. That artist touch, which immediately reveals when a man or woman has a sense of clothes, is rarely seen in Gothenburg.

On the all-important topic of food I found myself revising earlier opinions as I drew nearer to the roast beef of old England. It is customary in Sweden to deplore and to deride English cooking, and the Swede who has gained his experience of our food in London boarding-houses, in the cheaper restaurants and tea-shops, and in incompetently managed middle-class homes has every justification for his view. But we are a country of contradictions, and the sort of English people who understand food—and they are usually conservative people in something more than the political sense—understand it very well indeed. As regards raw material England is infinitely better off, both as to quality and variety, than Sweden. And, at least, in the cooking of birds, from the domestic chicken to the rarer kinds of game birds, I doubt if we are surpassed by any nation. The Swedes are the most ingenious contrivers of “odds and ends” and the variety of Swedish *delikatesser* is positively

bewildering. But when they come, as it were, to the point, the advantage, I think, is not on their side. Where Sweden does enormously have the advantage over us is in the fact that every Swedish woman, without exception, understands cooking and would be ashamed of her incompetence if she did not. In England, on the other hand, not more than about twenty per cent. of our middle class women are good practical cooks or have any understanding of food. They are apt to consider the whole subject as scarcely worthy of their attention, with dire results to our domestic contentment.

A point of difference between the Swedish and the English character which I have frequently noticed is their respective attitudes towards birds and animals, domestic and tame. The Swedes have not our extraordinary passion for animals. They don't make friends with horses, dogs, cats, rabbits, canaries, pigeons, parrots and even pigs in the way that we do. Some Swedes are rather fond of dogs, but I doubt if they ever regard dogs or cats as important members of the family, in the English way. They are not particularly fond of shooting (here I speak of the Gothenburg people particularly), and the birds, since they are not often attacked, are unusually tame. In short, if the Swedes have not our intense love for and interest in birds and animals, neither have they our consuming itch to hunt and slaughter them.

The train was drawing in now to the dingy railway station at Oslo and my random reflections were accordingly cut short. It was dark, and I

had only an hour to wait before my train started for Bergen, so that I had no chance to see anything of the Norwegian capital. The berths in the sleeping cars on the Bergen line, as indeed on all the other lines in Scandinavia, are exceedingly comfortable and well-arranged. I went to bed early, for I wanted to be up at dawn to look at the mountains. Alas, I did not have the opportunity of seeing the sun rise over the snowfields. If the sun rose at all, he never became visible, and the rain poured down from a melancholy sky. All the same there was something about these rugged and deserted mountains, sublime in their melancholy grandeur, which rendered this journey one of the most memorable I have ever made. I suppose this line, surely a triumph of engineering, must be one of the highest mountain railways in Europe. Finse, the highest point, where there is an excellent hotel and where winter sports can be enjoyed all the year round, was scarcely looking its best in the driving rain, but it was easy enough to understand that with the sun shining on its wide expanses of virgin snow it must possess a peculiar fascination for ski-runners. The place is, I believe, becoming increasingly popular with English people. While crossing the mountains the view was often obscured while the train ran through wooden tunnels, built to protect the line from snowdrifts. As we began to descend the valley, towards Bergen, the scenery became increasingly magnificent, and in the final stages of the journey there was a constant panorama of mountain, and forest and fjord, of indescribable beauty. Bergen,

itself, is a picturesque town, beautifully situated on a hilly peninsula and isthmus jutting out into the Byfjord. It contrived to look cheerful and inviting, even in the rain. But then, it is accustomed to rain, for the place has an average yearly rainfall of 72 inches, as compared with 26 at Oslo. A small special train took the passengers for England from the railway station to the quay, where the good ship *Jupiter*, of the Bergen Steamship Co., awaited us. The *Jupiter* was the boat which in circumstances of great difficulty and danger maintained the service throughout the war, and English people will always have a sentimental regard for her on that account. She is a comfortable boat; but those travellers who find a little whisky or brandy the best specific against sea sickness should remember to take what they require with them when they go aboard of her, for Norway is officially a "dry" country, as regards spirits. We were quite a cheery little company on board—to start with, at all events. But alas, the North Sea was in the devil of a temper. We ran into a gale, had to alter our course, and entered the Tyne, very much buffeted, nine hours late. I had not seen Newcastle before, and the contrast between it and Gothenburg was startling and depressing. On our way upstream we passed clusters of apparently derelict steamships; and about the whole scene, which was picturesque enough in the light of the setting sun, there was an air of stagnation and decay. As we emerged from the Customs shed we were surrounded by a horde of ragged, half-starved children, begging for pennies.

The town looked wretched in the extreme, dark, melancholy, ugly. But the hotel. . . . Words do not exist which can describe that hotel, its filth, its noise, its utter, complete and unadulterated hideousness! I can well imagine that Norwegian visitors, landing in Newcastle for the first time, are often tempted to fly back to their clean little ship and return in haste to their clean little country. And yet, and yet—whether it was the easy and unaffected affability of everybody one met in the hotel, or the waiter's good humour, or a quality in the air, I do not know—but even Newcastle, to the home-coming Englishman at all events, seemed to possess that indefinable “something.”

BOHUSLÄN

OF the country accessible to Gothenburg the most interesting part is undoubtedly the coast-line. Protecting the mainland from the sea is a multitude of islands, often only separated from one another by very narrow channels. The majority are merely large lumps of grey rock poking their heads up from the waves, but some which look most forbidding from the sea, have hidden valleys where trees grow luxuriantly and farming is carried on with profit. It is a pleasant enough excursion, in fine weather, to take one of the little steamers which ply inside the island barrier, to Uddevalla, returning on the following day by the outer route, passing Lysekil and the far-famed Marstrand. The last occasion on which I made this trip was an unfortunate one. I had agreed to meet the friend who was to accompany me on the boat at a quarter to nine in the morning. When I awoke on the day fixed for our departure I found that it was raining in torrents and the skies were as grey as the grey rocks of Gothenburg. For once in a way the marvellously efficient telephone declined to work, and I was unable to ring up and cry off the expedition. There was nothing for it but to dress and sally forth. I found my friend waiting for me. His already intense gloom deepened when he saw me. He had hoped that I should not

turn up and that he would have a decent excuse for returning hastily to bed. My arrival deprived him of that excuse. He is an efficient man who believes in completing, at whatever cost, any action on which he has embarked. He loathes the unfinished, ragged ends of things, jobs begun and given up. Without me he could not, of course, have gone: with me, he was equally unable to refrain from going. "It *may* clear," he remarked grimly. Incapable, myself, of speech, I followed him with bowed head up the gangway of the *Kung Rane*.

Needless to say, it did *not* clear. Our little steamer plodded its way down the river and then turned in among the islands, stopping to deposit portions of her cargo at one rain-swept little fishing village after another. The two trippers sat drearily in the saloon, gazing through the streaming windows at the desolate coast. Luckily my friend had thoughtfully brought on board a bottle of whisky in case of emergencies, otherwise I don't know how we should have existed. Hour followed leaden hour. Every possible subject of conversation had long since been exhausted. We were not supplied with newspapers or books. At last, late in the afternoon, when we had almost given up hope of arriving anywhere, our little boat entered the Byfjord, passed the wooded heights of Gustavsberg and arrived at her moorings at Uddevalla.

Uddevalla, despite the fact that I saw it at its worst, remains in my memory as one of the pleasantest Swedish towns that I have visited. There is a shady promenade planted with limes,



BREAKERS OFF LYSEKIL, BOHUSLÄN.

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by the river bank, the hills surrounding the town are agreeably wooded and there is something almost gracious about its setting. The surrounding country is fertile and in places pretty—quite unlike the melancholy and deserted expanse of rock and lake and forest which lies behind Gothenburg. The place owes its foundation to Dutch settlers. It has had its ups and downs, but seems tolerably prosperous at present. There is a large paper-mill, also a cotton-mill and other industries. It contains about 14,000 people and has very good railway connections with the whole of Sweden.

After perambulating the wet streets and climbing a steep, grassy hill to get a general view of the town, we returned to our hotel. It was an ugly building in a side street, but we were lucky in our choice, for on the night of our arrival the annual dance of the Landstormsförening was held. The Landstorm is, I suppose, a Swedish volunteer force corresponding to our territorials. In any case, the dance was a festive affair and had attracted a number of lively and good-looking girls. In the midst of the proceedings speeches were made and prizes for marksmanship awarded, amid much laughter and clapping. I had never seen Swedes enjoying themselves before, and the spectacle was heartening in the extreme. Among the dances there was a very charming Swedish national dance which was performed with much grace, also those forgotten favourites of my childhood, the polka and the barn-dance. The latter defeated me, but I contrived to dance the polka strenuously with a

flaxen-haired fröken, all impudence and smiles. In Sweden the girls appear to sit together in the intervals between the dances. The man approaches a table at which, say, half-a-dozen girls are sitting, bows to one and asks for a dance, and returns her to her table the moment the music stops. The custom seems to our notions devoid of joy, and from the male standpoint indecently economical. On the present occasion, however, having no command of Swedish, I was glad of it.

We departed from our hotel—an efficient, characterless institution, neither cheap nor specially dear, and totally lacking in any kind of charm—on the following morning, and took the train for Lysekil, where we intended to board the steamer coming from Oslo. I fancy the line must have been privately-owned, for its carriages seemed more elaborate than those on the State railways. The smoking-compartment we sat in was like a small lounge, furnished with about half-a-dozen leather-covered armchairs arranged round a table. It was exceedingly comfortable. As we neared Lysekil the sun came out and the clouds dispersed.

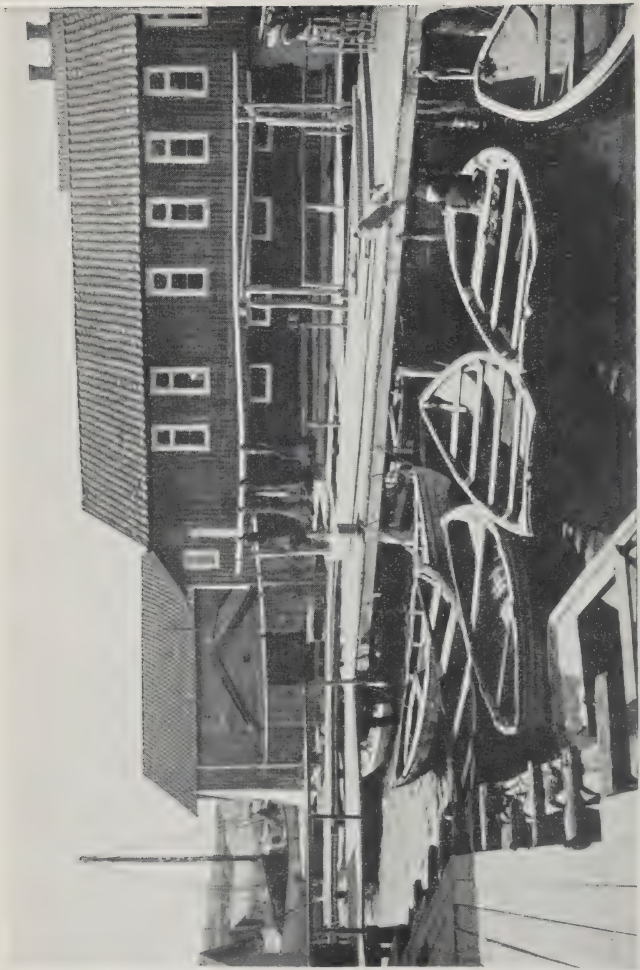
Lysekil is a fishing port of about 6,000 people, very popular in the summer months for the opportunities it affords of boating and bathing. Millions of herrings are caught every year off this coast and exported. The town also contains factories for salting anchovies, and for making fertilisers from various kinds of fish. Opposite, across the bay, is the fishing village of Fiskebäckskil. Higher up the coast is Strömstad, close to the Norwegian border, another popular

watering-place. Not far from Strömstad, on Norwegian territory, is the fortress of Frederikshald, where Charles XII was mysteriously killed in 1718. A cove is pointed out on the Swedish side of the frontier where the national hero launched his galleys after they had been dragged twelve miles overland from Strömstad. In this difficult feat Charles received much help from Swedenborg, the great mystic, who seems to have had much practical ability and inventive genius.

Bohuslän, forbidding though it is in certain aspects, is one of the earliest inhabited parts of Sweden. Here the legendary Beowulf, King of the Western Goths, performed his feats of valour. For twelve years Hrothgar, the King of the Scyldings (Danes), had endured the ravages and the spoliations of the monster Grendel without being able to kill or capture him. At last there came a strange ship to Hrothgar's land. It was full of armed men. Their leader, a tall and handsome young warrior, answering the question as to who he was and whence he came, said, "We are of the Goths' kind, Hygelac's hearth-sharers; my father is widely known, a high-born lord hight Ecgtheow." He was recognised as Beowulf and warmly welcomed. The same night Grendel attacked the King's palace. He forced an entry, seized one of the sleeping men, "bit him through the body, drank his blood, and tore off his flesh in great pieces." Then he advanced towards Beowulf, who, however, was on the alert. He laid hold of the monster with his two hands and tearing the creature's shoulder open broke its sinews and rendered it helpless. Grendel

limped away, leaving a track of blood across the marsh of the sea-monsters, and when he reached their lake, where his home was, he sank dead into the water before reaching his mother's cavern. The next night the enraged mother tried to avenge her son. She managed to kill one of the Seyldings and then escaped back to her lair. Beowulf at once went in pursuit. Clad in ring-mail, he sank through the deep waters of the lake. He was seized by the monster when he reached the bottom, but after a fierce struggle he slew Grendel's mother with a magic sword. Then he cut off Grendel's head and clutching it in his hand rose to the surface of the water with his trophy, which he laid at King Hrothgar's feet. This doughty warrior is supposed to be buried on a headland at Hrones-nass near Gothenburg. The songs and stories concerning the legendary heroes of this rugged coast, the home of Vikings whose deeds made them famous throughout Europe, are almost endless. The district abounds in cairns and tumuli, many of which are to be found on headlands overlooking the sea. In the Middle Ages the possession of Bohuslän was hotly contested by Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and the province constantly changed hands. Its people, inured to dangers both on land and sea for many centuries, are hardy and energetic. They earn their living to-day principally by fishing and by quarrying granite, both of which are dangerous occupations.

We lunched at the hotel by the quayside at Lysekil. Our little steamer arrived unexpectedly early and we had to cut the meal short and hurry



A FISHING VILLAGE IN BOHUSLÄN.

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on board. She was painted white and looked at first more like a summer pleasure-boat than the ancient and hard-working freighter which in fact she was. She was built, I fancy, in 1873, and must have had a rough time of it during the past half-century. We started off in the bright spring sunshine, heading into a breeze that blew gay flecks of white foam from the tops of blue waves. Small white clouds sailed across the limpid sky above us. The clear air, strong and pure, seemed to sparkle with a myriad tiny points of light. The whole world seemed gay—not so our ship. No sooner had we emerged from the protection of the bay at Lysekil than she began to throw herself nose-downwards into the trough of the waves, as if she were tired of her job and didn't care what became of her. She staggered and wallowed; she would *not* lift her poor old nose out of the joyous waves; in utter dejection she let herself be banged and buffeted and tormented and played the fool with by them. But somehow or another her ancient engines, with Scotch persistence, managed to push her along. We moved, slowly, but we moved. At intervals as we fought our way along through the skerries, the old boat stopped to take breath in front of some fishing village—usually a group of wooden houses painted that rich shade of red that is common throughout Sweden, and built by the water's edge upon the grey, uncompromising rock, without a tree or a blade of grass anywhere within sight. Sometimes we would pick up a passenger, who would be seen standing up, unconcerned, in a small boat, while the oarsmen

struggled to bring their craft within reach of our rope's end. The passengers usually arrived on board wet to the skin, but they did not seem at all perturbed.

We came at last to Marstrand, which is one of the most popular watering-places near Gothenburg. It is a town of great antiquity, built on the landward side of a small island which is separated from a larger and more fertile island (Kö-ön) by a narrow channel. The little place is dominated by a massive fortress with a huge round tower of granite, from the top of which one can see for miles in all directions. It must have been almost impregnable in its day. Marstrand is built of wood painted not the usual red colour, but a rather unpleasing shade of yellowish-green. It has, no doubt, like most Swedish towns, frequently been destroyed by fire, and now gives no impression of age. It is a clean and tidy little town, with two small public gardens and a pretty wooden church. Anything less like the usual conception of a popular watering-place could hardly be imagined. But in summer it is crowded with visitors, including an increasing number of Swedish-Americans and also of English yachtsmen. As a health resort, in the summer months, this whole coastline has much to recommend it. The air is magnificent and the boating and bathing unsurpassed. Two or three hours after leaving Marstrand our voyage terminated and our much-battered and dejected little ship reached her moorings.

Marstrand's rival as a summer resort is the island of Särö, which lies about twenty miles to

the south of Gothenburg. It is a beautifully wooded little place and anything but harsh in aspect. At Särö, the exile from warmer and more gracious climes can get the illusion that he is not in Sweden. It is well protected from winds, and warmed by the Gulf Stream, and contains a number of large villas set in beautiful grounds. The present King of Sweden is very fond of Särö, and, partly by the aid of a villainous railway service and partly by high prices, the place is kept very "select." The season is a short one and the hotels open only from the middle of May until the beginning of September. I did not know this, and set out blithely on a sunny day in April to spend the day at Särö. I walked for hours until I began to feel hungry, and then I tried to get some food. It was impossible. Nothing was open; and there was no such thing as a village inn. Not a bite nor sup could I obtain until I returned to Gothenburg. This absence of village inns and the difficulty of obtaining even the humblest kind of refreshment in the remoter country places in Sweden is one of the country's least agreeable characteristics from the tourist point of view. Except in selected places where there is a definite "tourist hotel," which is marked on the map and where the charges are sometimes very high, no kind of provision is made for the needs of the chance visitor. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the Gothenburgers rarely go for long country walks. Bohuslän is no district for the man with a rucksack, not only on account of the absence of inns, but also on account of the extraordinary monotony and loneliness of much of the scenery.

I once walked with a friend from Lake Aspen, about twelve miles from Gothenburg, to the little inland health resort of Hindås. We went across country over ridges of low rocky hills, past lakes so much alike that it seemed impossible to distinguish one from another, through melancholy and monotonous woods of Scotch firs. We saw, I think, but one human habitation on that walk of fifteen or sixteen miles, and not a single human being, until we reached Hindås. There were very few birds, and those that I noticed seemed bored to death. They looked as if they might almost have enjoyed being shot at; as if they had nobody to talk to. The land for the most part was very poor; and such of it as was not rock was monopolised by trees. It looked as if it could never have supported any population, and for this reason the lakes and woods had a strange virginal quality; and also a kind of repulsive beauty to which the soul might respond but which the physical eye only appreciated resentfully. It was a land without heart or bowels, a land without mountains, a land of lumps of rock and melancholy, inanimate fir trees, and of lakes like tear-drops from the eyes of some lugubrious god. Ugh! A horrid land. Nor was I much comforted when I sat down to dinner in the large, tidy, up-to-date, empty, characterless hotel. Snaps and pilsner, smorgåsbrička, hot dish. . . . *Toujours perdrix!* Monotony piled on monotony, gloom on gloom.

The Swedes, as I have said, don't make these rash excursions into their own waste lands, and no doubt they are right. And yet, for some queer



THE FISHING HARBOUR, SMÖGEN, BOHUSLÄN.

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reason, I would not have missed that walk. If I remember nothing else about Sweden, I shall remember that experience as long as I live.

Gothenburg is not rich in places to visit. Marstrand, Särö, the island of Styrö, and one or two other islands of the Skärgård, are the recognised seaside excursions for the summer months. Inland, there is the ancient town of Kungälv, under the shadow of the great fortress of Bohus (which gives its name to the province of Bohuslän), and there are the two health resorts of Hindås and Hultafors. This about exhausts the number of places that there are to visit on a sunshiny Sunday when one wishes to get out into the country. Kungälv is a picturesque little town which has been the scene of many historic happenings. A steep, thickly-wooded hill rises behind it, and it is very pleasant in the springtime to climb up through the trees to some point of vantage from which a view may be obtained along the two branches of the Götaälv. The great ruined fortress of Bohus stands in the foreground, on a small island, dominating the two arms of the river. Beyond it are the green fields and low hills of the island of Hisingen and in the far distance the towers and chimneys of Gothenburg. There is a large restaurant at Kungälv, much patronised during the summer; and a fleet of motor omnibuses, painted light-blue, maintains a regular service between it and Gothenburg. A short distance from Gothenburg, of which it is now almost a suburb and of which it is connected by tramway, is Långedrag at the mouth of the Götaälv, facing the old for-

tress of Elfsborg. It has two restaurants, one for the winter season and one for the summer, and a large bathing establishment and anchorage for yachts. Dances take place frequently in the restaurants, and it makes a pleasant change to dine where one can sit and watch the shipping entering or leaving the river, and the superb sunsets for which the place is famous.

It is a futile proceeding, no doubt, to try to institute comparisons between countries. All peoples have their specific virtues and failings; and all parts of the earth their special share of the beauties which Nature lavishes. It may have been noted by the attentive reader that Bohuslän has left me cold, if appreciative. This is not the fault of the country, but of my own temperamental make-up. I am afraid I was born with an instinctive dislike of colonies, "the great open spaces," and wooden shacks: and much of the country round Gothenburg (excluding the coast scenery, which is unique) calls to mind what I have read or been told about Canada. In all the countryside there are comparatively few ancient buildings, except such feudal strongholds as Marstrand and Bohus, and these have little claim to beauty. The farms and labourers' houses, in their fresh red paint, look as if they had been erected yesterday. The villages and small towns have also a modern and makeshift appearance. One misses England's great store of smaller country houses of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and the warm red-brick coaching inns and middle-class homes of Queen Anne date, which adorn the High

Streets of innumerable small English towns. Our old English houses and our gardens remain to remind us of the Age of Taste, when all classes of the community, save, alas, the working-classes, lived in comfort and in surroundings of beauty. These houses and gardens, village churches and seigneurial mansions are to-day a national heritage of inexhaustible riches. Alas, we take them for granted and do little or nothing to preserve them, and rarely give them a thought until we find ourselves in foreign lands.

In the province of Skåne, where there are many rich yeoman farmers who have great pride of race, I believe there is a wealth of fine old farms and country houses and other ancient buildings. But the soil of Bohuslän is probably, for the most part, too unproductive to have made this settled comfort possible.

STOCKHOLM

I

THE first sight which met my eyes when I emerged in the early morning into the corridor of the sleeping car was enough to make the stoutest heart quail. A desert of snow stretched before me, dotted here and there with snow-laden fir trees. The sky was grey and leaden. In the foreground two or three large and repulsive-looking birds hopped about in a menacing manner, as if they were looking for a human corpse in order to pick out its eyes. Gothenburg had been cold enough in all conscience ; evidently Stockholm was going to freeze me to death. At the moment, however, I had nothing to worry about, for the train was, if anything, too warm. By the time we reached the outskirts of Stockholm the sun had come out, and when we passed the new Stadshus its beams lit up the gilded pinnacle of its tower and shone upon the three golden crowns that airily surmount it.

I was to stay not in an hotel, but in the flat of some English friends ; and after breakfasting in the station, I made my way to my destination in a taxi which crunched rapidly along over the crisp snow. The flat was in the outskirts of the town, in a wide street composed of blocks of new apartment houses, which ended abruptly on

the edge of the pine forest. The rooms were large and beautifully warm, the wall-papers and decorations in excellent taste, and I think I never saw a flat more convenient and well-planned. From the moment I set foot in this apartment until the hour of my return to Gothenburg, life seemed to go at break-neck speed. Rarely have I met so many people, or visited so many different restaurants in such a short space of time. I was shown the sights with a vengeance. I remember in particular a historic Bohemian restaurant, in the old part of the town, called Fredens Källare where the poet Bellman used to write his compositions with the aid of many litres of Swedish punch. Down we went to a windowless dungeon and were waited on by girls in the national Swedish costume. On another occasion we took a car and drove into the pine forest and lunched in a wooden chalêt called Ulriksdal. Then I was invited to a luncheon party at the Opera Källare, the restaurant attached to the Royal Opera house; and on another occasion visited the very beautiful Stadshus Källare, under the new Stadshus, where even the knives and forks and coffee cups form part of the architectural scheme. Finally, for supper one evening, I was taken to the Grand Royal Hotel, whose vast restaurant can hardly be surpassed in beauty by any restaurant in the world. I have been in all the leading London restaurants, and in many world-famous restaurants in Paris, Berlin, München, Brussels and other capital cities; but I have never seen anything that could possibly be compared with Stockholm's Grand Royal.



STOCKHOLM : THE NEW TOWN HALL (STADSHUS) FROM LAKE MÄLAR.

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I believe Ragnar Östberg, the architect of the new Stadshus, is responsible for the interior decorations. The centre is laid out as a garden—a bright square of green carpet bordered by flowers in pots, with a fountain playing in the middle—and the walls are distempered a warm shade of reddish-brown. The lighting is admirably successful. The band, under one of Sweden's leading conductors, made one regret the convention prevalent in our own country that the only music one can listen to while eating and drinking is either jazz—or Puccini.

I haven't by any means exhausted the list of the places to which my indefatigable hosts conducted me. One which remains in my memory more distinctly than the others was at the top of one of Stockholm's twin sky-scrapers. Babel, was, I think, its name. From here while one drank wishy-washy Swedish tea one could see all over the city, in every direction, and very romantic and charming it looked with the sunshine sparkling on its snowy roofs and glinting on the frozen waters of Lake Mälär.

The contrast between Stockholm and Gothenburg is very marked. In one respect, for the poor man, Gothenburg has the advantage. The two of them are perhaps among the dearest cities in Europe at the present day; but whereas in Gothenburg there is little temptation to spend money, in Stockholm money seems to flow from one continuously, try how one may to be economical. Gothenburg is a city of family-life and domestic entertainments: in Stockholm the people crowd into the restaurants. Gothenburg

is solid, and serious and just a little lacking in animation. Stockholm, though it has also its serious and solid aspects, is noticeably full of movement.

II

Since it is built largely upon islands and is intersected by dark and hurrying streams, Stockholm has earned, inevitably, the nickname "the Venice of the North." To the Western European visitor there is something factitious about the appearance of the city, at first glance, though this by no means detracts from its charm. It looks as if it had been built deliberately upon a site skilfully chosen for its pictorial effectiveness and one has not the feeling as one has in so many French, Italian and English towns that the place has grown up and increased, through the centuries, by a process as natural as the growth of a tree.

There is, moreover, a touch of the exotic about nearly all the principal buildings in Stockholm. The huge rectangular palace, built of grey stone in the Italian renaissance style, which frowns upon the waters of Lake Mälär, though it is grim enough in all conscience and never looks more itself than when the city is draped in snow and the lake a sheet of ice, has yet a subtly alien air. The great solemn building has nevertheless a beauty of its own, and if the thought behind it, the conception of the monarchic principle, has been borrowed from Versailles, its Swedish architect has translated that thought into Swedish idiom. The original designs for the palace were made by Nicodemus Tessin the younger, at the



STOCKHOLM : THE GOLDEN HALL IN THE NEW STADSHUS.

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beginning of the 18th century. But the romantic military adventures of Charles XII interrupted the building operations and the palace was not completed until 1760. It is the *clou* of Stockholm, and has very much the effect of giving the city that transforming touch which makes it so plainly a capital.

Infinitely more exotic than the Royal Palace is the new Stadshus which is the first of Stockholm's public buildings to greet the eye of the visitor from England. It is easy enough to pick holes in Ragnar Östberg's now world-famous masterpiece. It is "literary," no doubt, and in rather an obvious way, and expresses, perhaps for that reason, nothing very definite. The display of "good taste"—and such good taste—may be considered by some a little overpowering, may seem to indicate a too complacent satisfaction with mere "beautiful" beauty and a lack of real significance. The phrase "the Venice of the North" is perhaps suggested to one a little too persistently: and when one enters its central courtyard and walks on through the arches to the water's edge, one feels that a special costume—doublet, trunk-hose and so on—ought to be provided for each visitor, before he is allowed to enter the precincts. But these, even if just, are minor criticisms. I think most people who visit Stockholm's Stadshus must feel that they are in the presence of a superb and harmonious work of art, which has been carried through with unfaltering confidence. The triangular site by the water's edge has been used by Östberg with the most admirable realisation of its pos-

sibilities. The colour of the red-brick of which the building is constructed is almost identical with that of our own beautiful Tudor brick work, and the whole vast pile has a southern warmth about it which contrasts strangely with its surroundings.

Stockholm was a member of the Hanseatic league in the Middle Ages, and in the narrow streets of the old town may be seen many 15th and 16th century houses which remain much as they were when they were erected by the prosperous merchants who originally dwelt in them. More interesting, in Stockholm, however, than the remains of the past—for there must be cities in Europe which contain more buildings of first-rate architectural interest than are to be found in the whole of Scandinavia put together—are the presages, architecturally-speaking, for the future. To have fine architecture necessitates fine patronage and an appreciative public. What the new Stadshus cost the municipality of Stockholm I cannot imagine. At present prices the expense must have been fabulous. But so determined were the city authorities that the great design should be completely realised that they must have given the architect practically *carte blanche*. For an example of such princely patronage of art one must go back to the period of the Renaissance. In the modern world it is almost unparalleled. It will be surprising, therefore, if given such encouragement Sweden does not now develop a distinctive style and if the buildings to be erected during the next quarter of a century do not make that period one of great importance in architec-

tural history. Hitherto, in architecture, Scandinavia has been too poor to compete with the richer nations of Europe. The vast majority of its buildings have been, and still are, made of wood. Wooden houses have virtues of their own, but they are perishable and, in appearance, monotonous. There is something queerly makeshift and "colonial," to English eyes, about a countryside where the farms and cottages and village churches are built of wood. In the towns, of course, wooden houses are few and far between. But even the towns are not as yet sufficiently rich in historic monuments of importance to tempt the art-loving tourist off the beaten track. Architecturally, Sweden is pre-eminently a country of the future.

III

I have found that, on the question of the development of the tourist industry in Sweden, the Swedes with whom I have discussed the matter are divided into opposite camps. Generally speaking, the more cultivated type of people do not at all regret that the stream of continental holiday makers has not been diverted towards their coasts. "Sweden has nothing whatever to offer the ordinary tourist," a Swedish lady, who had travelled much in Europe, once observed to me. "Except in the far north, the scenery is exceedingly monotonous. It is a country of immense distances; it is very expensive to live in; and it has never learnt to be cosmopolitan and accommodating in the way that the ordinary tourist expects. Again, it has

nothing to offer in the way of 'sights,' either as regards natural beauties or objects of art, which cannot be surpassed elsewhere. There is a great deal of charm in the peasant life of Dalecarlia and other parts of Sweden. But so there is also in that of Brittany or Bavaria or Tyrol, countries which the English tourist can visit at infinitely less expense. Our winter sports are good, but I do not know that we have anything so exceptional to offer the English lover of winter sports as to tempt him away from the Alpine resorts which he has been accustomed to visit for generations. Sweden is a land which the Swedes are best fitted to appreciate, and we are glad that it should remain unspoiled. A number of English people who can afford to do so and who know something about our country and its history, and like our ways, come to Sweden every year and are very happy here. But they are not tourists in the ordinary sense. I don't think we are ever likely to attract the clients of Messrs. Cook or Lunn." Those who take the opposite view seem to feel almost a sense of personal grievance that Sweden has not as large a share of the tourist traffic as, for example, Norway. Great efforts are being made to attract the foreigners' money to the country. The publicity undertaken by the Swedish Tourist Club is admirably done. "Free booklets," and every kind of information necessary to the prospective visitor are readily obtainable in the principal cities of Europe, and no doubt in the United States as well. I should be surprised, however, to learn that the response has been very considerable. Stockholm, like



STOCKHOLM : THE NORTHERN MUSEUM IN WINTER.

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all capitals, attracts a certain percentage of globe-trotters, and there are always a certain number of people who come to Sweden in the summer because they have never visited it before. But these are scarcely tourists in the ordinary sense. Most of them belong to the wealthier and better educated classes, who travel where and when they will. Marstrand is, I fancy, beginning to be known as it deserves, and there are always a number of English people every year who make the voyage through Sweden by the Göta Canal. The Skärgård certainly is unique, and given a fine summer, it makes a paradise for those who are fond of sailing and boating.

If the tourist, pure and simple, is still comparatively a rare bird in Sweden, the travelling Englishman on business bent is the exact opposite. In Gothenburg and also in Stockholm, practically the whole of the English residents not engaged in the teaching professions are commercial representatives. To the respectable middle-class business man Sweden offers all the attractions which it is unable to offer to the mere holiday-maker. The Swedes have what may be described, without intending anything in the slightest degree derogatory, as the bourgeois virtues and qualities, and the English business man who goes to live among them usually finds himself at home very quickly. He can "do himself well," he will probably be entertained a good deal and he will never be made to feel out of his element. If he is a respectable and moral man, he will enjoy the atmosphere of respectability and morality which everywhere surrounds him. There is no Continental naughti-

ness about Sweden ; it is a sensible country, self-respecting, highly-organised, healthy, honest, reliable and scrupulously clean. It is a country where the people keep their appointments, are punctual to the minute, and do what they say they will do. (As I happen to have been treated with the greatest discourtesy by one of the leading Stockholm publishers, who, after asking me to leave him a copy of one of my books, and promising to come to a decision within seven days as to whether or no he would buy the Swedish translation rights, has since neither returned my property nor answered my letters, these generalisations are wrung from me only by a stern sense of duty !)

IV

During my stay in Stockholm I found myself, for the most part, in literary circles—very pleasant and agreeable, but for anyone as unliterary as I am, a trifle embarrassing. I got a glimpse of how extremely uncomfortable it must be for the really eminent to visit foreign capitals, particularly for those who are neither adept liars nor protected by a natural rudeness. Leading questions, the answers to which are waited for with a flattering hush of attention, are showered at the visiting man of letters by the hour together. “What is your opinion of Mr. H. G. Wells ? What sort of position does Mr. J. C. Squire hold among English critics ? Is Mr. John Galsworthy considered to be the leading English novelist ?” To a slow-witted person like myself who takes a long time to form a critical opinion, and often changes or modifies it as soon as made, the necessity to

answer such questions out of hand was a sufficiently painful one. But as I had the advantages of obscurity, and no one was likely to quote me either in print or in conversation, it didn't so very much matter. But how awkward it must be for the Wellses, the Galsworthys and their like, on such occasions, when questions are fired at them about each other, and all the prospective writers of memoirs pull down their shirt-cuffs to record their pronouncements! I got so muddled that I didn't in the least know what I thought about anybody.

The "Won't you say a few words to us about . . . ?" habit is almost as prevalent, in Stockholm, as "*Que pensez-vous de . . . ?*" elsewhere. Prince Wilhelm of Sweden had just translated James Elroy Flecker's play, "*Hassan*," and the play was about to be given at the principal theatre in Stockholm at the time of my visit, so I was lucky, when compelled to "say a few words" to a literary club which met in the flat where I was staying, to have a subject at hand about which I was not entirely ignorant. Most English writers, I think, share my dislike of speechifying and lecturing. It seems rather absurd for a man to have to get up on his hind legs and burble about a subject to which he has devoted much time, study and thought, and about which he has already said in print, after a process of most careful consideration and correction, all that he has to say. However, since in many parts of the world there is a widespread demand for lectures, and those who are willing to comply with this demand are often very

generously rewarded for their efforts, it behoves them to overcome their national reluctance, and to try their best to do the job efficiently. I don't know how much of my discourse the audience understood; but they listened attentively enough. It was an odd experience to me to find myself talking about Flecker, in that ice-bound Northern capital. I had almost forgotten the young man, my grandson so to speak, who bore my name and was associated with the poet in a former age. Even my more immediate predecessor, the one who recorded his memories of Flecker in a small volume issued only some four years since, seemed then a trifle remote and unfamiliar. But my book was available, and I read it again with interest, thinking it a pious and unpretentious little work, and finding myself quite unable, still, to account for the abuse which it received in several of the papers which deigned to notice it on its appearance. I often, alas, find myself in the warmest, the most sympathetic agreement with those who "slate" my literary efforts; but a writer who has been reviewed fairly frequently for fifteen years or more easily learns to detect the difference between detached, and, therefore, legitimate, critical castigation and personal malice. There was so much malice displayed in certain quarters about my little book on Flecker that I could only suppose that by publishing it I had unwittingly trodden on the toes of some literary "vested interest." But for the necessity of "saying something" on that memorable evening in Stockholm, I don't suppose I should ever have looked



THE ROYAL PALACE, STOCKHOLM.

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at the book again, or given it another thought. I brought my remarks to a somewhat lame conclusion; my hostess read one or two of Flecker's lyrics, very slowly (she knew her audience); then we played a Swedish parlour game called, I believe, "the rude" game, and afterwards we danced to a gramophone till two o'clock. A pleasant evening.

Before I returned to Gothenburg I had the interesting experience of being taken to call upon Professor Albert Engström, the writer and artist, Sweden's most beloved humorist and the editor of the leading Swedish comic paper. He is a tall man, approaching sixty, with short, grey hair, a small pointed beard and twinkling eyes behind large horn-rimmed spectacles. There was something delightfully "boyish" and informal about his manner, which impressed me more than any amount of pomposity could have done—your imposing "personage" is nearly always a fake—and I was well able to believe him the genius that I heard him described as. His type of humour is said to resemble that of W. W. Jacobs, and in his comic drawings the types he chooses are often the rather bibulous fishermen and seafaring folk familiar to the readers of *Many Cargoes*.

V

What lends Stockholm its greatest charm, what make it in some respects one of the loveliest of the capital cities of Europe, are the waterways which surround and intersect it. When Birger Jarl laid the foundations of modern Stockholm in 1255, he was singularly well inspired in his choice

of situation. The old town was confined to three small islands, in the midst of the watercourses which connect the great Lake Mälär with the Baltic Sea, which now form the most ancient part of the capital. In all Stockholm's skärgård, interposing between it and the Baltic, there are about thirteen hundred islands, many of them beautifully wooded, others mere rocks. Dotted everywhere about the Archipelago are houses and villages and a vast fleet of little steamers, like floating omnibuses, maintains communications between them and the city. Modern Stockholm has long outgrown the site of Birger Jarl's original settlement, and now occupies about a dozen islands, connected with one another by bridges, and has extended to the mainland on either side. Stockholm did not become the capital of Sweden, until some three centuries after its foundation. Its first efforts at grandeur were made during the days of Gustavus Adolphus, when Sweden suddenly found herself a world-power of the first importance. She went largely to Italy and to France for her architectural ideas. The Riddarhus, or Assembly Hall of the nobility—which is certainly the most charming 17th century building in Stockholm—was begun in 1641 in a Franco-Dutch baroque style, from the designs of two French architects, Simon and Jean de la Vallée. In many respects French influence was very marked in Sweden during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. French taste in furniture, in architecture, and also in manners, predominated—at all events, among the nobility—and the result was not an entire success.



STOCKHOLM: THE OLDEST QUARTERS OF THE CITY.

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The Swedes, not unnaturally, found it as hard to imitate the lightness and grace of French furniture and house decorations, as they did to reproduce the light elegance of French behaviour. In the attempt to adapt themselves to alien fashions and customs, they must have lost some of their own racial genius and gained nothing worth having in its place. Modern Stockholm has quite recovered its own personality. It is entirely Swedish, not in the least like any other capital—not at all like Venice, in reality, and still less like Paris. It presents an appearance of orderliness and symmetry, it is tidy and clean as few other cities in Europe with a population of nearly half a million can claim to be. The revived interest in Sweden in her peasant arts and crafts was shown by the foundation in 1873 of the Northern Museum, near the entrance to Djurgården (Deer Park), which now contains an unrivalled collection of objects displaying the growth of Swedish civilisation from the earliest times until the present day. Skansen, on a wooded plateau in Djurgården is an outdoor annex of the Northern Museum which is exceedingly popular in the summer months. Here may be seen Lapplanders' huts, typical Swedish farm and village buildings, and numbers of the wild and tame animals indigenous to the country.

The National Museum, an ugly building facing the Royal Palace, contains a large collection of Scandinavian antiquities on the ground floor. The first floor houses a ceramic collection and sculpture gallery; and the second floor is a picture gallery which is particularly rich in

examples of the French and Dutch schools. Among the historical portraits is one of Queen Christina, by a French painter, which rivets attention. The intellectual brow, the Roman nose, large and lustrous eyes and sensual mouth make up a countenance full of the interest of contradiction. Sweden has been very fortunate in her rulers, and if Christina was not a success as a Queen—she abdicated after a reign of ten years—her eccentric and in certain respects unedifying career at least revealed her as a woman of great originality and intellectual gifts.

Stockholm, in summer, must indeed be one of the most attractive cities in Europe. Alas, at the time of my visit it was still in winter's grip, and I was unable to make excursions by steamer to Drottningholm, the summer palace of the Royal family, or to Gripsholm, on the shores of Lake Mälär. Gripsholm, the finest castle in the whole of Sweden, was built by the great Gustavus Vasa in 1537, and is preserved, with the original furniture and decorations, as a museum. Uppsala, one of Sweden's holy places, the capital and burial place of its pre-christian kings, and the most ancient of its seats of learning, can also be reached by steamer. But, indeed, the number of such excursions which can be made by water from Stockholm is almost endless. I left the city with much regret, hoping that it might fall to my lot to visit it again.

BARONS GOOD AND BAD

IT was at the Wivel, in Copenhagen, the big café-restaurant which stands by the entrance to the Tivoli Gardens mid-way between the main railway station and the Raadhusplads, that I picked him up. I couldn't help doing so. The most bitter experience of bores and blackguards encountered in railway-trains, on steamers, and in hotels has not served to cure me of a fatal willingness to be "matey." I suspect nobody, no matter how patently repulsive his outward appearance may be, I suppose from a kind of childish feeling that a man casually met in a foreign country *may*, surprisingly, delightfully, turn out to be *the* person, the friend of our dreams whom we have never known and are never likely to know. I have travelled about quite enough by this time to be aware that the vast majority of travellers belong to one type, that of those who buy and sell. And about the "commercial," no matter what may be his nationality, there is a certain dreary sameness. Still one goes on hoping. The man with whom I got into conversation at the Wivel certainly did not look like a man of business. He looked, indeed, what he was—a great, big, fat, innocent, blue-eyed lamb!

I suppose that all the European capitals have their "Wivel," and that in essentials they differ from one another not much more than do, say,

the wagons-restaurants of the International Sleeping Car Co. Swedes say that one must go to the Wivel because *tout Copenhagen* is there every evening, because it is (in short) one of the "sights." Danes say it is worth going to, if only to watch the hordes of Swedes, just released from imprisonment in their own rocky and over-regulated country, falling upon its *smörgåsbord*. The Danes have now outgrown the tyranny of the *smörgåsbord* and the Wivel, which has to be all things to all men, is said to be one of the few places in Copenhagen where the Swede finds his wants in this respect adequately catered for.

For the rest, it is large and lively and undistinguished, and not particularly dear. The waiters wear red waistcoats, and have brass buttons on their coats, and are often of a venerable age. There is a large and excellent band. There is a negro in a green silk turban to dispense Turkish coffee. There are a number of smart little boys in smart costumes to run about and do the small services which are beneath the waiter's dignity. As far as I tested the cooking it was excellent. (Where, in Copenhagen, Paris' culinary rival, is it not ?) The decorations belong to the period before Scandinavia got "taste" as people get religion, and are of a rather dreadful grandeur suggestive of the third Napoleon. Marble statues of naked and laughing little boys and of seductive ladies rise here and there among the tables. All the rest, the subdued murmur of talk, the band, the bustle and the cosmopolitan crowd—mostly composed of super-commercial

travellers with bloated cheeks and fat cigars—can very easily be imagined.

My friend and I were sitting to the left of the band, in the café, and I think we got into conversation over our joint need of an ash-tray. He looked as lonely as I felt. Certainly I was overjoyed to hear the sound of my own language, however oddly pronounced. I took to him at once because he looked so eager and so innocent. Emancipated from the rock-bound formality of his own country—he was a Swede—he was plainly heaving with a desire to commit a most un-Swedish act, to talk to a stranger. I am certain that, despite the rocky substratum of the Swedish nature they are essentially good and kind people. But in their own country they are apt to be gripped as in a vice by all the solemnity and pomposity that goes with Nordic gloom. Cheerfulness does break through occasionally, but not very often. In the evenings, one can see in the restaurants business men sitting alone over their iced punch, silent, immobile, without a smile, mentally and spiritually constipated.

But Copenhagen is to Sweden what Paris is (or was) to England. Already in my friend the outer covering of Nordic ice was cracking. The red-waistcoated waiter brought along another small and expensive whisky, and then it cracked completely. He emerged like a chicken out of an egg—the pinkest, the most childlike, the most innocent thing imaginable. He had a little fair moustache and his blue eyes beamed behind enormous horn-rimmed spectacles. His hair was straw-coloured, and it had a suspiciously literary

wave over his right eye. He confessed to being a writer of short stories (for his living) and of poems (for the good of his soul). He had had a nervous breakdown in Stockholm. Domestic trouble. (Later in the evening he became more precise. His wife was gadding about Montparnasse with "another"; and he could not afford to follow her.) He was of course a Baron. I have met many Barons, mostly quite as dilapidated as the average musical comedy article, and I have always found that they divide themselves into two classes—good barons and bad barons. Some good barons become bad. No bad baron, having once tasted the joys of badness, ever by any chance becomes good. Good barons earn an honest living as waiters, masseurs, dentists, journalists, poets, schoolmasters, professors or what-not. Bad barons, who are much better dressed and more baronial in style, hang about hotel lounges and Bohemian bars, waiting for commercial travellers to stand them drinks, in exchange for introductions to courtesans. They also essay, when opportunity offers, the rôle of *charmeur*. *Item*. Barons of both kinds are always linguists, and these remarks refer to barons in general, and far less to Swedish barons than to those of Central Europe.

My baron was, then, a good, hard-working, literary baron. I confess that I admitted that I too drove the pen; and that one of my novels in the edition of the excellent Tauchnitz (another "good baron") was displayed in the bookshop near the office of *Politiken*. "Ja so!" said he, beaming. "We are colleagues!"

“Alas,” he went on, “I must return to-morrow to Stockholm. To-night my nerves are not good. I have had also a most unpleasant experience. I have been robbed. And a man has just insulted me, a strange man whom I do not know. My friend, this gay and charming city is *dangerous* to men of goodwill. One should not come here without introductions. I see that. But I was very unhappy. Stockholm I had to leave. There were memories, you understand me? I could not sleep, I could not rest. So I came here to Copenhagen thinking that here everybody is kind, everybody talkative. I shall become distracted, gay.” (To think of my companion as “gay,” I confess I found difficult.) “On board the ferry-boat from Helsingborg,” he went on, “I become a leetle bit associated together with weesky-sodah. When I arrive at my hotel in Copenhagen it is scarcely as yet eleven o’clock. I do not wish to go to bed. I shall not so soon sleep. Absolutely not. So I go out, and near by I see a Bodega. I go inside and I find groups of people speaking English and French. It is Bohemian, this. I remind myself of Montparnasse. Some more association I have with weesky-sodah, and at last I hear a man at one of the tables mention the name of a friend of mine. And now I make my great mistake. My judgment is no doubt impaired. Perhaps, yes, the weesky-sodahs. . . . I send over the waiter with a note. I ask for my friend’s address. The tall man with black moustache who speaks his name rise and bow to me, and invite me to come over to his table. Soon we are left together. His

companions are, perhaps, glad of the opportunity to be rid of him, for he too was drunk. In a little while he tell me of himself. He is a baron from Esthonia and has lived in Paris. He is a writer of novels. He tells me that he has escaped that day from a clinic where his friends have put him, to recover, no doubt, from the delirium of the tremblings. He has no money, absolutely not. But he suggest that we go together to some *établissement* of the night in Copenhagen, of which, as you know, there are very many. A night club. You understand me? I see that. By this time I am become very friendly with this Esthonian gentleman with black moustaches. We talk of our books and of our literatures, of Paris, of friends. My money, I have but a little, is nearly all Swedish. I have but a few Danish crowns. My companion he laugh and he say, 'That's all right. I know everyone there.' Then he order a *bil* and we drive off, and soon I find myself in a house of very big crowded rooms. Oh, the crowd! It is terrible. Nigger band. Dancing. Jazz, jazz, jazz. We have more drinks and I forget—for I have so many friends in my own country—that my friend is not really a friend, but just some man I have spoken to, what you call a 'pick-up chance.' . . ."

Suddenly he paused in his narration. "Oh, pardon me, sir," he said, putting a tremulous hand up to his brow. "In London, last year, after I had talked together with some nice persons, a friend in the morning gave me some fruit drink of saline. Fizz. You know it?" (I did.) "To-day I have headache of the most awful, and I have

no fruit drink and I have not talked with no nice persons. . . . But, to continue. It was terrible, this place. Of the most vicious and the most costly imaginable. I find myself at a table and suddenly there come two weemen. I rise to dance. I return. I am courteous. A nigger bring chocolate, and these weemen seize from him big boxes, and I have to pay the nigger twenty crowns. My friend has disappeared. I seek for him and again I pay. I have no more Danish money, but they take from me Swedish. Again I sit down at table, and one of the weemens comes and nearly throttles me with her bare arm and presses her mouth to mine. Conceive of it. The insult ! This horrible public woman. I extricate myself with much difficulty. The arms cling round me, I am afraid for my case of notes. But these, what are left, I rescue. The Esthonian, he *laugh* at me." (I had some difficulty in keeping a grave face myself, and I think my confrère had a suspicion that I was not appreciating his tale as I ought to, that he had not managed to convey to me the exact feeling of outraged dignity from which he suffered. He was like a young girl who has been affronted, physically, by some undesired and unprovoked contact. All his feathers were astir. He was trembling with agitation and disgust. Something private and sacred, clean and untouched, had been smeared with mud by the professional zeal of the doubtless well-meaning and rather pitiful "public weemens." . . .)

"But, my friend," he went on, "I am not a pudic man, I assure you. I am no St. Antoine.

Absolutely not. To be associated together in sleep with refined and sympathetic female friend is for me a joy of the most elevating, of the most comforting. Ja so ! But *no one* ever shall call me, the swine-hound ! Yet that evening, my friend, thanks to the weesky-sodah, I find myself associated together with the swine-hounds and the swine-houndesses of all the nations. When I make to leave, they hurl horrible words at me. But I go. Yes, that alone, in the purity of my heart, I see clear. I go. My hat, my coat—well, it cannot be helped. I go. I find myself in a *bil*. I enter my hotel. I hide my head under the sheets, and then I sleep. When I wake in the morning, my head ache to split itself. And when I count my money it is all gone but one hundred Swedish crowns that I put aside in the pocket of my waistcoat.

“ Later in the day I go into the bar where I met first this Esthonian baron.” (The *bad* Baron !) “ He is there and he come across to me, and I give him a drink, for he has had no sleep, he says, and indeed, poor man, his hand tremble. I advise him to go back to his clinic, but he says the doctor will not have him. He returns then to his table where he is associated with man and woman. I read a book for a while. I drink some more. Then I rise to go. I shall not see this man with the black moustache again : for to-morrow, since my money is gone, I return to Stockholm. Therefore, from *politesse*, on my way out I go to him and shake him by the hand. I say no word of the fifty crowns he owes to me, nor do I ever think of it. I express hope we meet again. I say

I go to-morrow but I come back to Copenhagen soon. Then the man he sit with breaks in upon the conversation and says : ‘ *Don’t* come back ; *never* come back ! ’ I am on my way out. The man is a stranger. Does he mean to insult me ? It is terrible.”

Here I must observe that I have never been able to decide in my own mind what actually took place. I give the story as it was told to me. All that was clear to me was that the narrator felt that he had been insulted, for no reason at all, by a total stranger.

“ Had I not had those weeskies,” the blue-eyed one went on, “ I should, with my true dignity, have rebuked him. But it is not until I am outside in the street that I realise that this swine-hound has intended to insult me outrageously. It is insufferable. But what can I do ? I do not remember what the man looks like. I cannot return to him. Besides, it is for ridicule. If I object, why did I not do so at once ? Why did I not smack his not-known face ? Indeed, is it not true that when the weesky-sodah is in, the wit is out ! But I cannot forgive myself. All the time I think of the words of dignity and scorn which I might have addressed to that swine-hound. I can think of nothing else. Consider if I had but turned upon him a glance, a glance of hauteur, and repeated to my friend that I should come back and that I hoped that we should again meet, in more agreeable surroundings ? That would have let that swine-hound know that he was in the presence of a Swedish nobleman, of an artist, of a man of letter-writing. . . .”

My heart bled for him, as indeed would the hearts of any of those who belong to that section of the community, which *never*, in any circumstances, has the presence of mind to produce the epigrammatic "ticking off" at the moment when it is required. Ah, those sleepless nights of concocting verbal fireworks which can never be let loose! It is always the sensitive, those who suffer most from insult and least anticipate it, or deserve it, who are the most lacking in the quality of quick retort.

The enormous band, which is at times one of the Wivel's least cosy features, began to blare out a jazz tune, under cover of which the good baron, so to speak, did himself up. After all, I was as much a "pick-up chance" as his Esthonian. The Nordic sentimentalist ought never to travel without his pocket-refrigerator. Otherwise he can find himself so very naked. But the good baron, by confiding in a "pick-up chance," had merely been engaged in purging his personality of an unworthy and degrading experience. He was confessing himself to the first stranger he encountered—a disconcerting act (for the stranger) but of much spiritual significance to himself. I longed to pour the melted butter of soothing words over his atrocious wounds, but I could think of nothing to say. What can be said about an unprovoked insult? No insult can ever be "wiped out"; any more than the effects of a well-aimed flask of vitriol can be removed. Unprovoked malevolence has something of the absolute about it. For the victim it is a catastrophe, like the breaking of a limb.

The most brilliant "score" is a mere palliative. One must admit the fact that men and women, by their tongues, have power to inflict irreparable injury. The more one suffers from other people's tongues, the more carefully one should guard one's own. This platitude I kept to myself, for I do not believe that the good baron had any need to guard himself from his own malevolence, for there was none in his nature. Nordic ice is a hard substance. Perhaps that is just as well, for on the rare occasions when it melts there is often something singularly human and tender—and sensitive—underneath.

SOME ENGLISH BOOKS ON SWEDEN

WHEN I had finished writing my discursive notes on Gothenburg, it occurred to me to visit the Town Library to find out what my predecessors had had to say about it, and about the Swedish people generally. The number of travel books that have been written in English about Norway and Sweden does not appear, from the bibliographies which I examined, to be particularly large. Copies of most of them were available in the Library and I carried off a large pile to examine at my leisure. The first I opened, *A Tour in Sweden in 1838 ; comprising observations on the moral, political, and economical state of the Swedish Nation*, by Samuel Laing, Esq., gave a picture of the country which will astonish the modern visitor, so different is it from the Sweden of to-day. Morality was evidently Mr. Laing's strong suit. He begins his fourth chapter like this : " It is a singular and embarrassing fact, that the Swedish nation, isolated from the mass of the European people, and almost entirely agricultural or pastoral, having in about 3,000,000 of individuals only 14,925 employed in manufactories, and these not congregated in one or two places, but scattered among 2,037 factories ; having no great standing army or navy ; no extended commerce ; no afflux of strangers ; no considerable city but one ; and having schools

and universities in a fair proportion, and a powerful and complete church establishment undisturbed in its labours by sect or schism ; is, notwithstanding, in a more demoralised state than any nation in Europe—more demoralised even than any equal portion of the dense manufacturing population of Great Britain.” Mr. Laing, like a methodical Scotsman, is careful to base his contention upon the official returns published in the Swedish *State Gazette* in March, 1837, which show that in the year 1835 one Swede in every 140 had been convicted of a criminal offence. These figures were apparently by far the worst in Europe at the period. In London, even then considered a sink of iniquity, the number of convicted persons was one in 540. “Female morals,” or rather their absence, caused Mr. Laing the acutest pangs, and he quotes figures to prove that the Swedish young person of 1835 was the most deboshed female of her time—his conclusions being arrived at by a study of the proportion of illegitimate to legitimate births. The state of Stockholm, then a city of 80,000 people, fills him with grief. “Figures do not bring home to our imaginations the moral condition of a population so depraved as that of Stockholm. In such a society, the offspring of secret adultery and the births merely saved from illegitimacy by the tardy marriage of the parents, must be numerous in proportion to the general profligacy.” The proportion of illegitimate births in London was 1 in 38 ; in Stockholm it was as 1 to $2\frac{3}{10}$. The chief cause of this sad condition of Swedish morals he finds in the construction of society then prevailing

in the country. "The weight of public opinion upon the side of morality, and acting as a check upon private conduct, is lost in it by the too great proportion and preponderance in the social body of privileged classes—of persons, whose living, well-being, distinction, social influence, or other objects of human desire, are attained by other means than public estimation gained by moral worth." Whereas almost all writers on Sweden have commented either sarcastically or with amusement on the excessive formality of Swedish manners, on this subject Mr. Laing, for once in a way, is comparatively tolerant, though he is convinced that Swedish manners cover depths of moral turpitude. "Whatever may be the want of morals in this country," he writes, "there is no want of manners. You see no black-guardism, no brutality, no revolting behaviour. You may travel through the country, and come to the conclusion that the people are among the most virtuous in Europe, and it is only when you examine the official records of their criminal courts, and compare these with the amount of similar crimes during the same period in other countries, that you are obliged to come reluctantly to another conclusion. In Stockholm the extraordinary proportion of illegitimate births place beyond all question the want of chastity in its female population; yet in walking through the streets I never see an immodest or even suspicious look or gesture among even the lowest class of people. For propriety of dress and demeanour the town might be peopled by vestals, yet one-third of the infants are bastards. I confess I

do not like this in a people or in an individual. I prefer a little open Irish blackguardism. The man is much nearer virtue who appears worse than he is than the man who appears better." Even Swedish honesty, about which all travellers in Mr. Laing's day concurred—your baggage might be sent open, with no one in charge of it, from one end of Sweden to the other, with perfect security—does not deceive our Scotsman. "In a community without receivers there would be few thieves. What temptation can the peasant have to steal, rob, or murder, in order to obtain articles of dress which he could not wear without being instantly detected, nor sell without being suspected, from having in his possession articles not belonging to his station?" Mr. Laing is really overpowering, and one can imagine that his harassed Swedish hosts hailed his departure from their shores with a certain relief.

Another writer of a very different type, but scarcely less uncomplimentary to the Swedes than Mr. Laing, was a gentleman named Colton who under the pseudonym "Sylvanus" published an illustrated volume called *Rambles in Sweden and Gottland*, in 1847. Sylvanus writes in a slapdash colloquial style. He was evidently something of a wag and more of a man of the world than a scholar. The subject of Swedish manners fills him with righteous wrath. "The flourishing of hats, the bowing and scraping, and ceremonious 'backing and filling' that I have seen already would give the *boulevard du Temple* the 'go by.' I never witnessed anything equal to it. A Swede *cannot* let his hat alone; he will take it off

to your dog, if he addresses him ; coming in—going out—as well as every instant he is in a café or public room, is he clutching at his doomed beaver. I never know when I am right, or rather wrong ; and but for the weather and symptoms of baldness, I should certainly carry my hat under my arm, or leave it at home altogether.

“ This is very sad taste, and anything but a token of much heartiness, in my opinion ; as well as being a copy—from not the most valuable original in manners, under the ‘ new régime.’ ” Like most other English commentators (but not all), Sylvanus is more indulgent towards the ladies. “ The women are very different ; they have that pleasing bend and graceful *empressement*, that the usages of good society demand with comparative strangers, but *they* lead me to believe that manner is more thought of than *heart*.”

Of the people of Gothenburg, however, he admits that they “ have the character of being extremely hospitable, and partial to the English, as well as of possessing an energy in matters of business, that does not extend to the capital.”

He travels to Stockholm by the Göta Canal, even then the stock excursion, and thoroughly enjoys the beautiful scenery through which he passes. But the manners and customs of Stockholm society, and its villainously-paved streets, occasion several outbreaks. “ Ceremony, among all alike, is carried to a most ridiculous extent, If you put on your hat in the public room of a club, for one instant before you go out, though the room is neither the one they eat or read in, you are fined five shillings. With this regulation

no man, particularly a stranger, has any right to complain—if he knows it, he must conform; but with such a high tone of club law, you would not expect to see a floor so covered with saliva that a respectable poodle would not walk over it. In the dinner-room, at your coffee, in church, in the drawing-room—*everywhere* do you *hear* the disgusting deed incessantly committed. Walking with ladies it is the same—it is *one continued spitting*, for which they appear to tickle their throats, and strive to accomplish as *publicly* and *noisily* as possible. . . . Nothing but a friendly feeling,” he concludes, “induces me to make allusion to this most vile of all vicious accomplishments.” (It is perhaps hardly necessary to observe that the habit to which Sylvanus alludes has long since disappeared.) Sylvanus tells amusingly the story of how a young Swede, Count Mörner, meeting Marshal Bernadotte at the time when his country needed an heir to the throne, suddenly, on his own responsibility, offered him the job. He pays a just tribute to Bernadotte, whose descendants, it may be added, have all been respected and beloved. To-day Sweden probably has the most intelligent and accomplished Royal family in Europe. Of the Swedish national character our author formed the most distressing general impression. “I cannot get at a Swede’s *heart*, however mellow it may be, nor can his brother or most intimate companion; and when he fancies he is amusing me by tales of disparagement of all alike, the moment their backs are turned—a trait as universal as it is detestable—he makes a mistake, of which I now publicly tell

him, one greater than enters into his philosophy to conceive. Every man and woman alike, in this country, have something to say against the reputation of their respective acquaintance, added to a jealous hatred of a successful competitor in any walk of life, too sad to relate—sadder still to witness. . . . One trait in Swedish character is the most intense curiosity in everything relating to the resources and personal matters of all sorts and conditions of men, women and children. These are added to, subtracted from, or multiplied, according to the unequalled arithmetical capacity of the inquirer. In the working of statistics and minute calculation they boast of being a pre-eminent authority, and not without reason ; for if you would know how many iron masks for a gnat might have been made from the produce of Dannemora since the first shaft was sunk ; or how many grimalkin *accouchements* have transpired within the same period, a Swede only can tell you. . . . In a bit of genuine, fresh-baked household scandal he is unrivalled. The downright probing you will have to endure, in passing through the country, exceeds even that well-known Transatlantic operation in severity. Inquisitiveness in Sweden absolutely amounts to a painful anxiety, and the desire to know ‘how you do’ to a usurious interest. The ‘*amor pecuniæ*’ is another thorough Swedish plant, and throws into shade nearly every other flower of the mind : it is watered morning and evening, and attended with such assiduous care, that it has stuck its roots into many a Swede’s inmost soul so deeply as to defy every attempt to

eradicate it, were such ever made. . . .” After once again castigating Swedish “insincerity,” praising the moral and solid attributes of the peasantry, whom he considers the backbone of the country, and having a further tilt at what he calls the *petit maîterism* of Swedish manners, he concludes his “ungracious task of taking national likenesses without flattery” by a few observations about Swedish vanity. “For being head over ears in self-love, for thorough assurance and pious belief in a right to lay claim to perfect equality with every Crichton of the day, no man alive can exceed a Swede.” At the end of his chapter he finds a few good qualities—courtesy, public charity, and family affection, and later pays a high tribute to the commanders of the Swedish merchant marine, whom he considers “kind and hearty fellows than whom better behaved men do not exist.”

It is a pleasure to turn from the rather prejudiced and superficial, though occasionally perceptive, pages of “Sylvanus” to the stately pronouncements of John Story, who wrote a thin quarto volume describing his travels through Sweden in the year 1632, when the great Gustavus Adolphus was the protestant hero and Sweden was one of the greatest powers in Europe. “The people of this country,” says Story, “are reasonable, understanding and witty; and that not only for learning any mechanical trade, but also the liberal arts and sciences: for such as are of any eminent rank and degree, or competent means, content not themselves with the *Latin* tongue and knowledge of the liberal arts, but

give themselves also very much to the learning of the *German* or *High Dutch* and French tongues." He seems, like his successor Mr. Laing, to have made a study of Swedish morals, but his conclusion is that the Swedes in his day were "not so vicious as many other nations." For desertion and adultery the law was that both erring parties should lose their lives, the man being beheaded and the woman stoned to death. This being the case, one is not surprised to hear that the marriage tie was taken seriously in Sweden at this date and that maidens were not married without the consent of parents or guardians and much formality and that the "conjugal bed" was "among them kept undefiled and inviolable." Story observes, as the vast majority of his successors have observed since, that "the people, not only of late, but even of old, have been much commended for their great hospitality in entertaining strangers; which, as it is common to all these northern people, so it is most conspicuous in the *Swedish* nation, it being esteemed there a heinous indignity to deny entertainment to strangers, there being among them certain particular constitutions concerning this same particular. Besides, they are of that sincerity of life and conversation, and so far from wronging others, that this hath caused no small admiration to strangers and travellers passing that way; which may in this appear, that although there be very great forests found in the country, yet seldom any robberies on the highways are amongst them heard of."

John Story, although writing more than two

centuries before Mr. Laing and "Sylvanus," gives, I believe, a more truthful picture of the Swedish character as it is to-day than do either of the more recent observers from whom I have quoted. The Swedish love of learning and Swedish hospitality and honesty can never have been more apparent than they now are.

Dr. Thomas Thomson, F.R.S., an eminent medical practitioner who wrote a volume called *Travels in Sweden During the Autumn of 1812*, gives some interesting details of Gothenburg at that time. After deploring the lack of a proper inn, he states that "Gothenburg is entitled to the name of a magnificent city. It consists of a long wide street called the Stora Hamna Gatan (Great Harbour Street)." He then refers to the fact that the town having been "twice burnt down within these ten years, a law has been passed prohibiting the building of any more wooden houses," which law he thinks will prove much to the town's advantage. He describes it as "perhaps the most thriving town in Sweden, owing in a great measure to the present state of communication between Great Britain and the Continent." In Dr. Thomson's day the Gothenburgers dined at two and had supper at nine and were noticeably fond of large parties. He was treated with the usual hospitality, refers gratefully to a Mr. Lorent, originally a Hamburgh merchant, who lived in great splendour about four miles from the town and had a large garden attached to his house "under the charge of Mr. Ferguson, a Scotchman." Mr. Lorent, the genial doctor refers to as "the most polite and obliging man I ever

met with." There was a considerable British element in the town and he mentions by name Messrs. Kennedy, Sinclair, Barclay, Fisher and Dickson. His professional brethren, among whom were Doctor Lampert and Dr. Eckman, evidently treated him well and he is pleased with the cordiality and lack of envy prevailing among them. His remarks on the coffee and tea in Sweden might be made with equal propriety to-day. "The coffee," he states, "is excellent, greatly preferable to what is usually drunk in England." It was actually imported from England, but owed its superiority "solely to their understanding better how to make it." On the other hand, he finds that "Swedish tea is just as bad as their coffee is good."

A book which impressed me as being just and truthful above the ordinary, as well as being the result of long and intimate knowledge of the subject, was one called *Ten Years in Sweden*, issued in 1885 by a writer who signs himself "An Old Bushman." His actual name, I believe, was Wheelwright. He was a sportsman, with an interest in botany and natural history, and no doubt his chapters on Scandinavian *flora* and *fauna* have the value which, without immodesty, he claims for them. Personally I was more interested in his remarks about the Swedish people, among whom he lived for so many years. "A want of kindness and courtesy towards the stranger," he says in his preface, "is certainly not among the faults of the Swedes, and I can pretty confidently say that there are few other countries in Europe,

where an Englishman is better received than in Sweden."

Of Gothenburg the "Old Bushman" is inclined to be scornful. In his "hints to sportsmen" he observes: "I will then suppose a man to have landed in Gothenburg without a friend, and without knowing a word of the language. . . . He will get on well enough in Gothenburg, where about every third man speaks English, nor will he require any assistance till he comes right up into the country. It will be very little use for him to remain in Gothenburg, where living is as dear as in England, and very little sport to be obtained at the present day, except by the residents, who now have all the shooting in their own hands, and are exceedingly jealous of strangers. There is very little trout fishing in the south of Sweden, and there are only two or three salmon rivers along the whole range of the southern and south-eastern coast, and it is quite as difficult to get leave to fish them as in England. . . . When an Englishman leaves home he does not travel to meet Englishmen; and I think no town so undesirable a residence for an Englishman as a second-rate foreign one, where English customs and manners are universally aped, and English prices charged for foreign produce. Nothing but English goes down in Gothenburg, and they tell a good story of a Gothenburg swell who went into a coffee-room there and ordered a real English dinner. He must have real English beef-steaks, real English porter, in fact he so bothered the girl with his English orders, that at length she asked him whether she was also to

bring him English salt ; the name by which our Epsom salts are known in Sweden.

“The man who only visits Gothenburg has seen very little of Sweden. The Swedes he meets with are spoiled by the number of English whom they see in this little seaport, and the few English who are resident there will be of little or no use in introducing him, either to the sporting or natural history of this fine land, and the scenery round the town, although pretty, is scarcely Swedish ; so if he wants to see real Swedish scenery, real old-fashioned Swedish customs, and enjoy a little fair sporting at a moderate price, he must shake the dust off his shoes at the good town of Gothenburg, and steam up the Wener at once.” Here I must interpose the observation that Gothenburg is no longer a “little seaport” but a large and flourishing city, and although a knowledge of English is certainly widely diffused among its inhabitants, and the English appear to be well thought of again, the English colony is now infinitesimal in numbers, and can exert but little influence on manners. English visitors, nowadays, are most unobtrusive : and are practically all confined to one type, that of the representative of an English trading concern, a type which in appearance is hardly distinguishable from its Swedish equivalent. Gothenburg, whatever its faults may be from the English or the Swedish standpoints, no longer deserves the sobriquet “Little London.” To return to the “Old Bushman.” “I never in my life,” he continues, “fell among kinder people in sickness than the Swedes. I have been pretty

lucky, and I cannot sufficiently thank God that, in a wandering life, I have had so little sickness. But three or four times I have been rather seriously ill here, and then the kindness and sympathy I received from all classes were past belief. As for the peasant women who nursed me, no trouble was too great for them, and there was really something beautiful in the kind, attentive way in which they waited upon me, and, above all, the cheerful manner in which they anticipated all my querulous wants. The doctors are in general very clever. . . . The English reader who has only associated Sweden with ice, snow, and bears, would be struck with astonishment upon entering a Swedish country gentleman's house, and seeing the style of living. At first the stiff politeness of the welcome (for I know no country where the *outward* forms of politeness are more strictly observed than here, and in this respect they are like the French, whose manners are, I fancy, much copied) might detract somewhat from its cordiality ; but before he had been an inmate of the house for twenty-four hours he would find himself as much at home as if he had known the hospitable inmates for twelve months. Notwithstanding, however, all the form and ceremony which is far too prevalent among themselves, I have invariably seen that their innate courtesy towards a stranger will cause them to overlook much which they would condemn in a countryman of their own. I have often sat down to dinner in a shooting-coat, and received quite as hearty a welcome as the other guests who were in full dress. And I may here

add that dress is carried to almost too great an excess among the Swedish gentry, especially in the towns.

“ But, as is always the case, the female flowers in the domestic *parterre* would naturally please the stranger the most ; and what I like in the Swedish ladies is this, that although they never neglect the duties of the house (and I always fancy that the women in Sweden, of all classes, have much more to do than the men), you will never catch a real Swedish lady unprepared to receive you—she is always so neat and clean, dressed in a becoming style, and ever with a glad smile to welcome the stranger. Her gown is most probably home-made, but it fits her as if turned out by a first-rate milliner. Her whole dress is plain, and with little ornament. Her hair (and they often have magnificent heads of hair) is either smoothed neatly over her forehead or gathered up behind the head. But the neatest head-dress of all is, I think, a coloured handkerchief thrown carelessly over the head and tied under the chin ; this is the usual head-dress with the peasant women, but not half so much used by the ladies as it would be if they only knew how well it became them. I am scarcely judge enough to say what style of beauty is most prevalent among the Swedish women. You see as many dark women as fair, large as well as small, and some remarkably handsome faces. And many a proud titled English “ star ” would find it hard to hold her own when brought side by side with the fresh healthy beauty of the north. I do not know how it is, but I always felt soon at ease in their com-

pany; there is something so kind-hearted in their manner that a stranger is at home with them at once. No affectation, but still no forwardness. I fancy more thoroughly domestic or more affectionate women do not exist, and were I 'Coelebs in search of a wife,' it is here where I should come to seek her. . . . It is singular, considering the very low state of morals among the females of the lower class (and a peasant rarely thinks of marrying a wife until he has lived with her some months in open adultery), we rarely hear of a *faux pas* among the better classes. I never read of an action for crim. con., and as for a duel, I do not believe that one was fought in Sweden during my time for love, jealousy, or any other cause. Yet, with all the freedom of manners which is so peculiar to the lower classes and female servants, especially in the inns, where scarcely anyone thinks of paying a bill without kissing the pretty girl who has waited on him, before all the company, I do not believe there is a bit more real immorality here than in England, for we never by any chance in Sweden hear of a trial for those crimes which so often disgrace the columns of the English papers. . . . The Swedish gentlemen are in general hospitable to a fault, especially in Wermland." (Värmland, Selma Lagerlöf's country.) "Good-natured, polite and courteous to strangers, and when you get to know them, some of the jolliest fellows under the sun. They take life easily, never meet troubles halfway, and what I respect them so much for, is, that they never turn their backs upon a friend in misfortune. They dress remarkably well, and

unlike many other of our foreign neighbours, are always scrupulously clean in their persons and linen. They are generally fine-grown, stout, and tall, often with remarkably handsome open countenances (for a fine manly countenance, I think I never yet saw a better one than that of the present Swedish King) and take them all together, they are as fine and manly a race as one would wish to see."

All this might be written with equal justice and truth at the present day. The Swedes are not now, I think, so disinclined to take exercise as they were in "Bushman's" time. In the summer they walk and swim, football teams have recently greatly increased in numbers and in skill in the game, while in the town of Gothenburg alone there are, I believe, about 200 gymnastic classes, apart from those which exist in connection with educational institutions.

Another agreeable and very gentlemanlike writer on Sweden is John Blaikie, author of *Among the Goths and Vandals* (1870). Like Mr. Wheelwright, he was struck with the English atmosphere of Gothenburg. "Gothenburg is a sort of English colony," he writes. "Numbers of its people are English by birth and extraction, and many more affect our manners and habits. We have been its best friends. An Englishman long ago set up a brewery there, and 'Carnegie's stout' rivals the famous productions of 'Barclay and Perkins.' . . . Englishmen are at the head of great cotton and linen manufactories, and in ship-building we have contributed valuable lessons. The leading firm in the timber trade is

essentially English, and the founder of it, arriving there in the beginning of the century, with staff in hand and half a crown in pocket, amassed a colossal fortune. Amongst the most striking of the public buildings is an English church, erected by its members, in which an excellent clergyman makes stirring weekly appeals to crowded congregations." It should be remarked in passing that all Mr. Blaikie's "Englishmen" were Scotchmen, and that the diminutive St. Andrew's Church is tucked away in a corner, so to speak, and could never have been a "striking" public building, even in 1870. Mr. Blaikie had come to Sweden to stay with an Oxford friend of his called Frank Heathcote—a handsome guardsman and former member of White's, Boodle's and Almack's, who after going the pace for some years saved the wreck of his fortune by leaving his native shores and settling in Sweden. Heathcote's home—he had married and was living the life of a Swedish country gentleman—was some thirty miles from Uddevalla, and Mr. Blaikie describes, with feeling, the miserable posting arrangements and atrocious roads. "The distinctive classes connected with agriculture," Mr. Blaikie notes, "are the 'patron' (including such of the nobility as own landed property), the 'Bonde,' the 'Torpor,' and labourers of diverse quality. Patrons, when not noble, are our country squires. Considering their social position, they are but scantily endowed with worldly goods, and estates are often heavily and distressingly mortgaged; but this does not prevent them from taking things easily. They eat and

drink well, and use wonderfully little exertion in the direction of their affairs. . . . There is much comfort about country houses. They are chiefly of wood, and the thickness of the walls helps to keep them cool in summer, while the peculiar stove fitted into each room allows the temperature to be easily regulated during the protracted winter ; and then there is that simple and genial hospitality which is never stinted—such indeed is the pressure employed to make one eat, that you fancy yourself in the presence of Dean Swift's Mrs. Bickerstaff. In connection with eating is a habit, trying to the head of a stranger, of drinking a glass of white brandy—an indigenous concoction—before sitting down to each of the principal meals. It is supposed to assist the appetite, and I cannot say it seriously interfered with mine. The furnishings are scanty in comparison with our home fashion, and the polished or painted floors, clean and tidy-looking though they be, seem in Englishmen's eyes a poor substitute for rich and sumptuous carpeting. . . . Between the members of families and servants the relations are very much of the primitive sort. The familiarity would shock the grandeur of our modern establishments, yet there is nothing vulgar or offensive about it. It displays itself in an interest in the affairs and belongings of those they serve, so that, during a friendly discussion on house topics, one need feel no surprise if the table-maid should correct some statement of fact, or express opinions at variance with the general view." After the "patron" comes the "Bonde," who, according to Mr. Blaikie, takes the place of the ancient

English yeoman. He is "hard-headed and hard-working—the director of his small establishment, and the real embodiment of Swedish agricultural prosperity. He makes an excellent salesman, and struggles to have the best of every bargain. When he goes to market he leaves behind, like our own farmers, some part of his truthfulness. . . . The Bondes exist in great numbers, and, unlike the patrons, represent riches beyond what their deportment and style of living would denote. There is another difference in this, that their small possessions are preserved for generations in unbroken descent, younger sons being drafted into the Church, commerce and army of the country." The "torpor," or farm labourer, who holds his cottage and small strip of land from the landlord in exchange for so many days' work a week, existed in many parts of Sweden in a state of great poverty, but was never in any sense a serf. His condition has greatly improved since Mr. Blaikie's day. Indeed, poverty, in the sense that we understand it in England, seems to have been almost eliminated from Scandinavia. The wages of town labourers are very high, which helps to account for the extreme dearth of everything, but they are well fed and well educated and for their children the career is open to the talents perhaps more completely than in any other country in Europe. Mr. Blaikie deplores the physical indolence of the Swedish men, their lack of interest in games and sports and ignorance of swimming, boating, etc. All this has entirely changed in the last half-century. The young Swede of to-day takes a pride in physical fitness. The Swedish

gymnast is famous throughout Europe, and better swimmers and divers are nowhere to be found. Football and boxing are advancing in popularity by leaps and bounds. With the marked decrease in the consumption of spirits during the past half-century has come a corresponding increase in physical culture.

A work of a very different kind from Mr. Blaikie's is Mr Horace Marryat's illustrated two-volume work, *One Year in Sweden* (1862). The copy I have before me is inscribed by the author to L. Lloyd, presumably that famous old sportsman, now a legendary figure, whose jokes are still repeated in remote parts of Sweden, who wrote two much-quoted books, *Peasant Life in Sweden* and *The Game Birds of Sweden*. Mr Lloyd evidently did not like his friend's book, for he has written on the fly-leaf, in pencil, "Don't like the style—too flippant. L." Personally, I have not noted any flippancies in Mr. Marryat's volumes. They are crammed with historical allusions, folklore and genealogical and antiquarian information. He may—for all I know—be inaccurate, but he is undeniably interesting. Of Gothenburg he has a good deal to say. "Göteborg, like other towns, is much improved during the last twenty years, though, sad to say, the row of trees planted along the canal's bank—last relic of a Dutchman's rule—has been destroyed. Still, if the town has lost its trees, the streets have gained in magnificence; every vista is terminated by the bold hills and blue waters, most attractive to those who arrive fresh from mild woodland scenery. Long avenues of trees have replaced the ramparts,

trees, planted in a double row, cut into arches, through which rocks and hills are seen within a leafy framework. . . . Save a few Dutch houses, Göteborg is entirely of modern construction; a splendid theatre near the boulevard, and a newly-built church of brick with tapering spire, do credit to the Swedish architects. Wooden buildings being now forbidden by law, everything is of brick—why, no man can say, in a country where stone abounds. . . . The early Scandinavians piled up boulders unhewn and rough; their descendants still do the same, and will till foreign zeal and capital be called in to their aid. The stones of the first Christian churches were moved by Anglo-Saxon workmen, and in later days when Gustaf Adolf's Domkyrka was built, they sent to Aberdeen for stone, sooner than avail themselves of that within their reach. To those who look on Australia and the antipodes as the only road to fortune, it may seem strange to be told that Sweden, geographically so near, opens a good investment for industry and capital. Yet such is the case, if time be taken by the forelock. . . . The present commerce of Göteborg is chiefly in the hands of Scotch houses—Carnegie, Gibson, Seton, Dickson and others—all of whom from small beginnings have amassed princely fortunes." Both the Gibson and Dickson families here alluded to are still prominent in Gothenburg life. The famous Jonsered linen mills, which have been in the hands of the Gibson family for over a century, are models of their kind, the most humane and friendly relationship having always existed there between the workpeople and their employers.

“Two hundred and fifty years ago King Gustaf Adolf founded Göteborg,” Mr. Marryat continues. “The old city lay higher up the River Göta, by Lödese. It was much frequented by the Dutch, who, jealous of the Oresund, hoped to plan a route through Sweden, viâ Russia, to Persia and the Indies. In 1612 Christian IV of Denmark took the fortress of Old Efsborg and destroyed the city; a year later, by the Peace of Knaröd, the towns of Sweden were restored; but seven years elapsed before the castle was recovered, and then only on a payment of one hundred thousand dollars. Lödese was already partially rebuilt, when the young King, struck by its unfavourable site, on an island of which the Danes possessed one half, determined to found a city on the continent near the mouth of the Göta Alf (river). Tradition says how, when he stood upon a rock, puzzled what site to fix upon, a little bird pursued by an eagle sought shelter at his feet. ‘Aspice Omen,’ exclaimed the bystanders, after the manner of the *Æneid*. Gustavus, delighted at this presage, built the town where it now stands, and, wisely remembering that ‘two of a trade could never agree,’ he packed up Lödese and sent it by water to new Göteborg.

“The chief citizens of Göteborg were foreigners—Dutch merchants hastened to establish themselves, and a crowd of Dutch boors arrived, doing much by their industry to improve the soil, introducing methods of making cheese and butter as yet unknown in Sweden. Abraham Cabeliau, known in the fishmongering world, from a cod which still bears his name, was appointed burgo-

master. Under his direction the town was fortified after the Dutch fashion by sluices and a dam, so that the surrounding country could be inundated at a moment's notice. These precautions were necessary, for twenty years later Christian IV, jealous of the young seaport—a 'nagel i ojat' (nail in his eye) he termed it—sent a fleet to attack the harbour. . . . Christian endeavoured to sail by Old Elfsborg under Dutch colours: the plan, however, miscarried. . . . Gustavus greatly patronised Cabeliau the Dutchman—his family, perhaps, too much, for by Margaret, one of his daughters, he had a son known later in history by the name of Count Wasaborg. . . . The commerce of Göteborg is now crowded up against one jetty, far too small for its requirements, but the authorities, awake to the necessities of the case, and convinced of the folly of messing matters, have caused a plan to be drawn out on a grand and liberal scale. New granite quays, founded on piles, are already in course of construction; and in a few years there will rise on the banks of the Göta Alf a city of great magnificence. . . . A commercial seaport, its harbour bristling with shipping and steamboats, is a fine sight anywhere, but when favoured by nature, as this is, surrounded by hills and rocks and a vast extent of water, it becomes doubly imposing. Göteborg may already be termed the Liverpool of Scandinavia."

It is time now to see what the ladies have to say. I confess that it was with some excitement that I opened a work entitled *Life in Sweden: With Excursions in Norway and Denmark*, by a Miss

Selina Bunbury. I have no authority, beyond a guarded hint from herself, for calling her "Miss"; but I seem to see her as a middle-aged Victorian spinster, a gentlewoman, kindly, religious, but indomitable. For all her demureness she is not a woman to be trifled with; and I like to imagine her as possessing a sharp tongue, a sense of humour, and an eye like a gimlet. Her book, which is in two volumes, was issued in 1853. Evidently she had not outgrown the literary enthusiasms of her youth, for she starts off thus: "Morn on the Waters! But, surely, Childe Harold never bade his native land good-night, or good-morrow, from the deck of a steam-boat that left St. Katharine's Wharf, London!" She travelled first of all through Norway, and arrived on Swedish territory at Strömstad. This was due to an accident. She had to wait two days at Strömstad, until the steamer could proceed to Göteborg. The British Consul, when she asked in despair what she was to do for two whole days, advised her to take a bath. She accordingly bought a ticket.

"I went and presented the ticket to some very yellow-skinned old women, one of whom took me under her direction, and conducted me to a bathing-room. There she commenced operations; and, having left me sitting on a stool, went out for a moment and came back with a tin can full of warm, soft, shiny, black mud. This she rubbed on smoothly, until it was clear that though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, a European woman can. When the Ethiopian colouring process was complete, she put me to stand in a

deep bath of warm water, and raising a sort of pump, or immense squirt, she discharged at me a volume of cold water. At this I shrieked, and entreated mercy; but on she went—I suppose my ticket had said so—until the water-battery was exhausted. She then turned more hot water into the bath, ceased the cannonade, said something very polite and went away; thinking, I suppose, that I had now got the worth of my ticket, and leaving me to faint or revive in the warm bath, as seemed most convenient to me.

“This slimy mud—taken, I believe, from the bottom of the sea, and made warm—is reckoned very good for rheumatism; but the baths of Strömstad in summer, and the gymnastics of Stockholm in winter, are the Swedish panaceas, more especially for the daughters of Swedish families. For my part, I found two days at Strömstad rather too much of a good thing. It is a small group of houses held in granite jaws, without a bud or blossom, leaf or sprig to diversify the earthen-grey and iron-hard aspects of all around.”

Her voyage to Gothenburg—I have made it myself and know what it is like—was anything but comfortable, but she endured being tossed about and soaked to the skin with the philosophy of a hardy traveller. (She confesses, later on in her book, to having visited nearly every country in Europe.) From Gothenburg she makes the inevitable canal trip to Stockholm. It is amusing to find her observing about this trip what so many Swedes have said to me, in confidence, within the past few months. “To confess the

truth—if it be whispered only—I thought the famous Gottenburg Canal the most wearisome mode of travelling that ever was invented.” Her first impressions of Stockholm, perhaps because her friends who had issued such a warm invitation had not troubled to meet her, were unpleasant in the extreme. But she is just enough to the natural beauties of its site. “And so, seated on her seven islands, instead of seven hills, appears the Venice of the North, which its inhabitants prefer, as if in burlesque, to call the ‘Paris of the North.’

“No! to Venice, naturally, some resemblance may be made out; to Paris, artificially, none.

“Yet the natural resemblance to the former is but a faint one; it consists chiefly in both being the children of water. But Stockholm wants the charming uniqueness of the true Venice, the only Venice; which, unlike any city of the earth, springs forth from the sea, without apparently a foot of land to rest upon. Stockholm, on the contrary, chiefly built on islands as it is, is clearly seen, even at a distance, to be partly elevated on a high rocky site, partly to descend even to the water’s edge. The water is bordered with trees, rocks, hills and turf banks, covered with flowers. Venice rises from her bed of waters, undistinguished by a tree, a rock, a glimpse of solid land. But if it were not for this peculiarity of Venice, the water-approach to the northern capital might well compete the palm of beauty with the now mournful widow of the Adriatic.”

When the first shock of her lack of reception had worn off—“now, then, fancy you see me

commencing my acquaintance with the social life of Sweden, standing alone on the pier of Stockholm, drenched by rain, half-buried in mud, and quite resigned to misery"—she seems to have settled down with ready adaptability. Very soon she made the acquaintance of Lake Mälär, and her enthusiasm is infectious. "Beautiful Mälär! the heart may warm and glow upon thy waters, as well as upon those of Como or Maggiore. Yet now as I sail over you I say to myself,

‘There’s something in a flying-horse,
And something in a huge balloon;
But in the air I’ll never float
Until I have a little boat
In shape like to the crescent moon.’

For quite in the spirit of my desires are the thoughts and resolves of the poet; and had I a little boat in shape like to a crescent moon, I should try it on Lake Mälär first. Never, no never, could the blessedness of a solitary sail, in such a little equipage, be more fully experienced elsewhere. There no cigar-smoke would dim and pollute the pure air of heaven; no huge cloak-and-smoke-enveloped men would each moment startle me with a scrape and a roar and explosion which make me think something is surely amiss in the steam-machinery, until a discharge at my feet, or, if polite, over the side of the little packet, informs me that the lining of a Swedish throat must be of some invulnerable texture which never wears out—a species of gutta-percha, perhaps. The Swedes are the politest people in the world; but—I was talking of Lake Mälär.”

Sylvanus, the reader will recall, was even more outspoken than Miss Bunbury upon a painful topic. *Dear Selina Bunbury!* She grows more human and sympathetic after every page. How vividly she describes her horror on learning that her bedroom in Stockholm was to be hermetically sealed for six or eight months! The dialogue with her landlady, when the double windows are put in, cotton-wool laid in the space between each, and thin strips of white paper pasted all round the openings and crevices, is positively poignant. As a concession to her, one pane in both sashes is left so that it is *possible* to open it. "But you must not open it!" cries my hostess; "no, madame, that must not be. If you open it now, you will let in the flies; and if you open it when winter comes, you will let in the cold and let out the heat. The cold will get into the walls and destroy them, and we must pay for that; and if you let out the heat it will cost us too much in wood. The walls would get so cold, we should never be able to get them warm again; but when the cold is not let in, then much firing is not used." In vain poor Miss Bunbury enquires how she is to breathe! I have myself suffered such agonies of semi-suffocation in Swedish homes that I can realise precisely what she endured. I have not yet encountered any people with such a terror of the open window. Even on the warmest days they close the windows fast.

"The class of servant-women in Stockholm," Miss Bunbury observes, "is certainly the best-looking, and, I might almost say, the most graceful of the persons I usually see. 'They make you

a curtsy,' said an Englishman of rank, 'worthy of a duchess.'

"I do not know if duchesses are famous for curtseys, but I know that I have been watching a workman and a servant-girl talking in the street—the man with his hat in his hand, bowing to her as if she were a duchess, and she making a curtsy suited to a Court Drawing-room. Many of these poor girls are, unhappily, miserably paid; two, or at most three, pounds a year being the rate of wages. The best-looking get places at restaurants or inns. It is a painful subject," Miss Bunbury adds discreetly, "and I must leave it here." "Family life in Sweden," she continues, "is more diversified than with us; the uniformity of our domestic evenings would be intolerable to people so addicted to amusement, especially as they are by no means a reading people. Every-day life here has perhaps a blending of the French and German, with a much stronger tendency to the latter. Their desire to resemble the French is rather an affectation than a reality; in frivolity and apparent levity they may sometimes appear to do so, but there is an essential seriousness in their character, and in their aspects, a heaviness, also, in general in their persons, which render their hilarity entirely national, and by no means like French vivacity. Thus some Frenchman tells of a Swede who went to Paris, and fell in love with his landlady, who objected to him on the score of his not being lively (*vif*) like her own countrymen. One day she was alarmed by a most terrible noise overhead in the good Swede's room, and rushing there in

fear that the floor would give way, she found all the chairs laid down in a row on the ground, and her lover leaping over them in rapid succession. That he had lost his senses the Frenchwoman was sure, but in answer to her terrified exclamation, he replied, 'I am making myself lively.'"

Miss Bunbury makes great play with the Swedish people's diseased passion for titles. Of the Swedish nobility she forms the poorest opinion. "That it should be so large a class in so scanty a population is not surprising, when every son in a family takes the title, and transmits it again. With a few striking exceptions, it is the poorest class here; too proud to work, and too poor to live without working."

Like successive generations of English visitors to Sweden, Miss Bunbury finds it hard to get it into her head that in Sweden it is for the stranger to pay the first visit. Until she discovered this, "when told that any persons wished to make my acquaintance, I merely expressed my thanks, and expected a visit. The acquaintance consequently was not made, as the visit was expected from me. The Swedes are generally desirous of making the acquaintance of foreigners, but in many cases the mere fact of a presentation is enough. Two faults in the national character are apparent, even to a stranger—vanity and fickleness."

I take leave of Miss Bunbury with regret, and recommend her work to the amateur of forgotten travel books.

Before closing this brief glance at what English writers have remarked about Sweden in the past,

I must quote a page or two from a very agreeable and apparently well-informed book called, *A Brage-Beaker with the Swedes : or, Notes from the North in 1852,*” by W. Blanchard Jerrold, illustrated from sketches by the author. Mr. Jerrold begins his chapter on Gothenburg by breaking a lance with Mr. Samuel Laing, whose description of the town “was, perhaps, a true picture in 1834 ; but it was ludicrously false in 1852.” He is delighted with the town, notes its rapidly-increasing prosperity, its fine, wide boulevards and the comfortable houses of its prosperous merchants. “Under a full moon, on a cloudless night, Gottenburg, from one of its bridges, had a truly Venetian effect ; nothing was wanting, save the gondolas softly stealing about, and the dark Italians standing in bold relief from the white houses.” He is invited to a dinner-party, and observes : “By the way, I might write much about this same dinner, were I altogether at my ease on the subject ; for, of late years, a few people from my ‘great and glorious’ country appear to have visited this part of the world with a determination to get as many gratuitous dinners and as many pert descriptions thereof as possible out of the hospitable Swedes. As I have remarked already, I am not, therefore, altogether at my ease on this subject. I should like to convey to Englishmen some correct impressions of the social observances here, but I tremble to think that a picture designed to present general characteristics should pass for individual portraiture. I am not at all inclined to herd with those who eat a man’s dinner, that they may

study the contour of his head, take an inventory of his furniture, and remark upon his wife. I will try to catch the general points of a Swedish dinner-party without falling into personality. In the first place, then, I found the Swedish people essentially a ceremonious people. If a Frenchman, on a moderate calculation, removes his hat twenty times in the course of a morning walk, a Swede lifts his thirty times. In a room the bowing is incessant. The men bowed to one another as we bow to ladies; even intimate friends appeared to accost and take leave of one another with the nicest formality. This was all very French; but then the people looked English. Yet, I should add, in these formalities there was nothing constrained, nothing, after a time, freezing; but it was necessary to have experience, and the experience was troublesome in the getting." He marks the difference in manner between the English after-dinner orator and his Swedish brother—a comparison in which the Swede has the advantage; and deplores, in passing, the fact that "persecution in religious matters, in this country of Gustavus Adolphus, among this people, whose ancestors fell like heroes for religious emancipation, was cruelly practised." Miss Bunbury, I recall, had also been shocked by the treatment accorded in Sweden to the Roman Catholics. "But, as I have already written, there was to me, an utter stranger here, a heartiness about the men with whom I was brought in contact—a sincerity and grace, which opened my heart towards them. I had been told that the Swedes generally were mean and treacherous.

I found them, to a stranger from whom they had to expect no benefit, gentle, full of attention, and magnificently hospitable."

He is surprised by the fact that the merchants close their offices for two or three hours in the middle of the day in order that they may dine in comfort. "I can imagine," he says, "the disgust with which your regular ten-hours-a-day English merchant (who takes a chop at his desk) would hear of these proceedings. There are many Scotchmen flourishing at Gothenburg, who, with 'precocious sagacity left their native country at an early age': I should say that *they* do not lose two or three hours in the day over the dinner-table." Mr. Jerrold evidently met a number of boon companions at Gothenburg, was struck with their genuine friendliness, wide learning and absence of affectation.

Mr. Jerrold was not a particular admirer of the Swedish *cuisine*. He noted the indifference shown to roasted joints, and the fact that horse-flesh is consumed, and observed that a passion for extraordinary combinations had destroyed the hearty appetite, while the love of sauces had enchained the national palate. He praises the excellence of Swedish coffee, and mentions in passing a fact which few Englishmen have the courage to state, so hard do superstitions die, that "good coffee is not very common in France." "The rye-bread, which the diners eat in large, thin biscuits, is really and truly an invention worth the attention of gourmets. It gives a zest to the appetite during those pauses between the courses, which are so trying to the epicure's

temper ; it clears the mouth to enjoy the wine ; and its digestive qualities also recommend it." He observes that the " fish is invariably swimming in hot butter, and is thus spoiled," a remark which reveals him as a man and a brother.

On the subject of the Swedish peasantry Mr. Jerrold is complimentary. " They do their work for their class honestly and thoroughly ; and indicate before the rest of Europe, not excepting England, the capacity for sound legislation that resides in all great working populations. In this light they assume a dignified position, which no thoughtful stranger travelling through their villages should for one moment forget. They have all claims to his respect. In all their homes lie books they can read ; for the Lutheran priest will not marry them till they can understand the meaning of a printed page, and write their name. To compare the Swedish peasantry with the best portion of our Irish peasantry would be to insult the Scandinavian people. Therefore, let not Englishmen approach the kingdom of the most accomplished prince in Europe with any feeling that he is a highly-civilised individual about to cast a patronising glance at a state of affairs that will remind him of the dark ages of his own country. A broad and distinct line separates the noble from the burgher, and the burgher from the peasant in Sweden ; yet I found that the nobles are always ready to grasp by the hand any member of either of the classes below them in station who has done the State any signal service, or raised himself from poor obscurity to affluent celebrity. . . . As I have said a broad and

distinct line separates classes in Sweden ; yet I observed a hearty good-will pervading the entire people. . . . There is a natural good breeding in the Swedish peasant—a deference towards those above him—but no awkwardness. Thus, judging the condition of the Swedish peasant by his actual experiences rather than by the statutes which exist to bind him, I am inclined to think that he leads a happy life, that paths of honour are fairly open to him ; that his physical wants are not ill supplied ; and that he has not much to complain of.”

Readers who have persevered through this chapter should, I think, be able, by a process of mental addition and subtraction, to get a more truthful impression of the Swedish people than could be supplied by any one observer. They will have noted how the country reacted upon the amiable and accomplished Miss Bunbury ; the jovial and warm-hearted Mr. Jerrold ; the sour, statistical Scotsman, Samuel Laing ; the volatile Sylvanus and upon sundry other sportsmen, gentlemen and scholars.

Sweden is still a country where men bow and take off their hats to one another incessantly, but usually stalk into a room in front of their wives. Even in the street it is for the man to acknowledge a female acquaintance or not, as he thinks fit.

In two periods of her long history Sweden has played a leading rôle in the affairs of Europe. The military record of this small people, under the leadership first of Gustav Adolf, and subsequently of Charles XII, is astonishing, and it shows of what the Swede is capable when he is

stirred to the depths. It is not impossible that Sweden may once again startle the world. If and when she does so, let us hope that it will not be by further signs of her military prowess, but rather in the domain of science and in the arts of peace.

SOUTHERN SHADE

A SOUND TYPE OF MAN

I

THE domination, despotism almost, which certain types of English men—and English women—seem to be able to exercise over small communities of their compatriots in foreign lands has always amazed me. But the supreme example of a leader of an “English colony,” which I have so far encountered was Parker. Parker had to be seen to be believed. I had dumped myself down, quite accidentally, in a little town on the Italian Riviera in which my fellow-countrymen cluster in considerable numbers during the autumn, winter and spring. It is needless to say that Parker’s fame had not reached me in advance.

We were sitting, the Colonel and I, on cane armchairs outside Albertini’s pub, when the name of names came up. “And who,” I innocently inquired, “is Parker?” The Colonel turned on me bright blue, astonished eyes. “Good Lord, haven’t you met Parker yet? How long have you been here?” he asked. “Ten days, sir,” I replied. “Here ten days and haven’t met Parker!” The Colonel sipped his cocktail and lay back in his armchair to digest this information. “It’s extraordinary,” he said at last. “Why, Parker *pervades*.” He waved his hand in a gesture which included the unruffled waters of the Mediterranean, the whole *spiaggia* from San Bartolomeo to Santa Margharita, the *passeggiata*

on which we were sitting and the villas on the wooded hillside which rose behind us. "He's an astonishing feller," the Colonel went on. "He's the English *padre* here, you know. Always getting up things. Lectures and so forth. Catches any well-known person passin' through, and makes 'em lecture. He'll probably make *you* lecture, if he hears you've done some writin'. His great idea is to improve the relations between England and Italy . . . not that I can see that they're in any special need of improvement. I've known Italy for thirty years or more, and I've always been well-treated by the Italians and never had any fuss or bother. However, Parker's a great man for propaganda. He's very thick with the Fascist Boss here, and wants to get out some members of the British Fascisti and have an Anglo-Italian demonstration—flags and fireworks and that kind of thing. Not much in *my* line, I'm afraid. All the same, one can't help admiring the feller. Patriotic chap."

I began to take a malevolent interest in Parker. For the moment, however, we dropped him and turned to the daily discussion as to where on earth Albertini got his gin. The Colonel surveyed his empty glass with the greatest suspicion: he lifted it and smelt it. "I'll bet you that's methylated spirits!" he said at last, with the air of one who has made an important discovery. Albertini came out of his dark cavern in shirt-sleeves, with a napkin under one arm, and grinned at us. "Nice-a morning, Colonel," he observed. The Colonel scowled and held up his glass. "Smell that," he ordered. Albertini smelled

dutifully. "You've been making our cocktails out of methylated spirits," the Colonel observed, in menacing tones. "Might poison us, you young scoundrel!" Albertini repudiated the accusation with warmth. Never in his life had he used anything but the finest London gin. He dived back again into the caffè, and returned in a moment with a bottle of gin which bore a well-known label. "What could-a you have better than that?" he asked. The Colonel snorted, "All I know is that my last cocktail both tasted and *smelt* of methylated spirits." Albertini had a far-away look in his eyes: in the distance he had espied a well-known figure. "Reverend Parker," he observed, effectively changing the subject. We all looked. Coming rapidly towards us along the *passeggiata*, negotiating the crowd, as it seemed, by a series of agile leaps, was a tallish fat man in grey flannels, with a kind of pepper-and-salt, semi-clerical straw hat on the back of his head and pince-nez perched upon a long, pointed nose. "Just you leave that bottle there, my son," said the Colonel, when Albertini made a grab at the gin to put it back among the other exhibits. "Just like Parker," he observed. "He has a genius for turning up at the right time—for himself."

Yes. Albertini's pub was Parker's objective. He "blew in," with a quick, boisterous, efficient air, much like the air which a movie actor might be expected to assume if he had to play the part of a "big" American business man. There were evidently no flies on Parker: not one fly. "Morning, Colonel," he shouted cheerily.

"Here's a new arrival, Parker. Let me introduce you," the Colonel remarked. Parker looked me up and down, gave my hand a 100 per cent. he-male grip, and snapped, "Pleased to meet you, sir," in best American style. I don't know why this observation should petrify one in the way it does. It invariably strikes me dumb for at least ten minutes. Is there a stereotyped reply to it? "The pleasure is *mine*": something like that? I gave it up, and watched in silence while Parker got his cocktail mixed, under our envious eyes, out of the right bottles. "Nice class of gurl we're getting here this year, Colonel," Parker rattled on, smacking his lips. "Just been talking to Lady Green's daughter—quite a smart little filly. She's got a party of her gurl friends with her. Things will be quite gay this season, I expect. Oh, and I've just had a wire from Professor Briggs. He has agreed to stop a night on his way through to give us a lecture on Pompeii, with lantern slides. Let's see, that'll be on the 18th. Well, I must go and do some work, I suppose." With a rapid nod to the Colonel and a half-nod to myself, Parker blew out as rapidly as he had blown in. I watched him for some minutes, leaping and surging among the crowd, rather like a sea-lion. "Where on earth is he off to now?" I wondered. Parker's activity was portentous, it deprived one of breath: I felt as if he had given me a terrific blow in the stomach. I sat limp, trying to recover. Was this, could it be, "pep"?

"Astonishing feller, Parker," said the Colonel,

for about the sixth time in the space of half-an-hour. "He pervades."

II

On the afternoon of the 18th a tea-party was given at the Hôtel Grande Italia in order that Professor Briggs might meet his audience before the lecture. I had completely forgotten about it, but happened by chance to be sitting in the lounge of the hotel, when again Parker "blew in." "Hullo," he said. "Nothing like being here early if you want to meet the swells. The Professor and Mrs. Bradstock will be along in a quarter of an hour, I expect. I'm just going into the kitchen to instruct them how to make the tea. Can't make tea, these Italians." He disappeared rapidly. I was aghast. Luckily Lady Helen came in and saved me from instant flight. She was one of those queer, withered, unobtrusive Englishwomen in reduced circumstances who sit by the Italian sea and think of things that happened many years ago. She lived in the worst and cheapest hotel in the town, where she did obscure and furtive "good." She was so shy that even Parker, who was a thoroughly up-to-date snob, did not bother about her particularly, though of course she had to be present when any function took place. "I think we shall have a very pleasant lecture to-night," Lady Helen observed. Dear optimist! I am sure she had gone through the whole of her life asserting, perhaps believing, that the weather would "soon clear." In her humble, shy, yet dignified way she was a very great lady. She was instinctively

considerate, and instinctively retiring, and capable (as I knew) of the most amazing gallantries. Her pale gold hair parted in the middle, her rather dowdy black silk dress, her cornelian brooch, her "sensible" black glacé kid shoes, her black-and-white silk sunshade—all were purely and perfectly Victorian. I can't give you the impression she made, for I am not clever enough to put a perfume into words. I can only say that she had queer old standards, lovely old standards, standards which existed long before there were any Parkers. She was perfectly simple and perfectly honest, she had always believed everything that she had read in her newspaper, and her eyes were as blue as the Colonel's. I don't know what the old Earl did, the original one, because I have long since forgotten the little history I ever read, but I have a vague impression that it was something rather glorious and first-of-Junish. Or was he that colonel of a cavalry regiment in the Peninsular War who headed a charge and was preparing to engage the commander of the enemy's forces, when, noticing that his opponent had lost his sword-arm in honourable combat, he raised his own sword to the salute and rode on? He might even have been that eighteenth-century governor of Madras whom Admiral Suffren thought guilty of impoliteness. You remember the delicious story in Hickey's *Memoirs*? The whole business of mutual extermination was held up for an exchange of courtesies. Far more important was it than the possession of India that Admiral Suffren should be assured that in the matter of

which he complained—a letter left unanswered, or something of the kind—not the slightest discourtesy had been intended. The messenger bearing the reply had disappeared, had perhaps been killed. And so, this important matter having been cleared up, and the two gentlemen having maintained their own and their country's honour by an exchange of civilities, the war continued. . . . Yes, there must have been a good deal of that kind of thing behind Lady Helen. Never, as long as I live, shall I forget her face when she read in the paper that the Kaiser had not really called the British Expeditionary Force “a contemptible little army.” This brings me back to Parker. Parker, as the Colonel had before observed to me, was a great man for propaganda.

We were suddenly surrounded, and Parker carried on such a quickfire of conversation that we thought we were all talking at once. (One of Parker's habits was to fire off a rapid series of questions and not wait for the answers.) The Professor emerged after a time, thin and clear through Parker's hubbub. He was very tall and had one of those noses that look as if they were intended to open tin cans, a mellow-speaking voice Oxonian in intonation, and an air of bright abstraction. He looked one of those men who when not remorselessly, tirelessly, excavating classical antiquities, live in studies, surrounded by gigantic tomes—the type that during the war, for some odd reason, surpassed even hysterical spinsters in the shrillness of their clamour for other people's blood. And yet so kind, “so

sound," so much beloved by his wife and his two little girls, and by the men of his college. Odd—but then people *are* so odd! If any writer attempted to put down all the things, all the flatly contradictory things, that he knows to be true about other people or about himself, he would at once be put to death. That is, I suppose, a very good reason why no writer ever has made such an attempt. Mrs. Bradstock was a very smart lady with very short skirts, very silken silk stockings, and a husband in India. She was by profession a "collector." She had two nice admirals, one fairly active general, colonels of all shapes and sizes, all the smart-looking youths in the place, a Fascist boss, but—so it seemed—not, so far, a professor. The conversation went on. Parker (who had entered the Church by the back-door, and why he had entered it at all Heaven only knows) asked the Professor what type of man "we" are getting at Oxford nowadays? Was it a "sound" type? Parker, as a patriot, believed in "sound" types. Was not he himself a 100 per cent. sound type of *padre*? And then, as far as poor Lady Helen was concerned, he dropped his brick. It was the "Kadaver" story, which he had seen in the newspaper. How he laughed! *That* was propaganda! *That* was the stuff to give them! "Just by altering some captions! Made all the Chinese think the Germans used up the bodies of their dead soldiers. . . . Did more good than any other propaganda story in the war. Why, I shall never forget the effect it had, even in this place."

Lady Helen had become rigid. "But that

story—I read it in *The Times* newspaper,” she said, with a sort of hopeless finality. “Oh, yes, of course it was in all the papers,” said Parker. “They weren’t in the know. You couldn’t do much propaganda in war time without using the newspapers.” Great chasms yawned beneath Lady Helen’s feet. The world was breaking up. She gripped the arms of her chair. To think of it! And the agony of those years, when she had felt forced to put away the memories of the Germans she had known and loved in her own youth, to put them away! Even Otto, she had innocently believed, Otto too must have grown into one of those fiends in human shape who had done things so unspeakably more dreadful than those of which any other race had ever been guilty. . . . And she had read it in *The Times* newspaper. . . . In *The Times*, and apparently it *wasn’t true*! And they were saying that it had been invented, or at least allowed to go without contradiction, by the *British authorities*! There was even talk of a forged diary having been written to support this lie. All the glorious first-of-Junishness in Lady Helen’s blood and bones rose in horrified revolt and indignation. She was overwhelmed with shame. Like a young and innocent girl who, out of the blue as it were, is suddenly stricken with dreadful knowledge of “the facts of life” from the lips of an evil-minded servant, so her innocence and ignorance had been destroyed. Well, perhaps Parker, for once in a way, had been a better propagandist than he knew. No matter how sensitive one may be, it is better to be shocked and shamed

and hurt and horrified and thrown off one's balance by the truth than to go on believing lies. Parker was sublimely unconscious of the sensation he had caused. He had the newspaper in which he had read the account of the English General's * alleged indiscretions under his arm. "Will you lend me that paper, Mr. Parker?" Lady Helen asked in a voice which she had to make a great effort to keep under control. Parker handed it over promptly, and then forgot her existence. Mrs. Bradstock had entered the field, the collector's glint in her eye, and he was anxious to see what happened. Lady Helen took out her old-fashioned lorgnettes and held the newspaper before her. When she had finished she put the paper quietly down upon the table in front of her, excused herself to the company, said good-bye to everyone with perfect composure and slipped away. I couldn't help wondering whether some old German general living in reduced circumstances on his Pomeranian estates, some Conrad or Otto, would in a day or two receive a letter in Lady Helen's pointed Italian handwriting.

III

Parker began to exercise over me a kind of evil fascination. He was colossal. One simply never knew when he might not come out with the most stupendous things. The lushest combinations of brutality and folly uttered during the years of war hysteria by men paid to preach

* The interview was subsequently repudiated, but it served the useful purpose of opening the eyes of innumerable Lady Helens to the nature of propaganda and the danger of accepting as gospel "what you read in the papers."

peace on earth and goodwill towards men, were milk-and-water compared with Parker's diurnal prattlings. But when Parker was *in the mood*! When his drinks were being paid for by retired members of His Majesty's forces, *that* was the time to hear him! The Colonel—I mean *my* Colonel: there were many of them—was a mild, benevolent, modest old gentleman, with a whiskyfied complexion which recalled Sassoon's "scarlet Major at the base," and a considerable knowledge of majolica, of which he had a fine collection. He used to be uncomfortable during Parker's outbursts. If Parker hadn't been a clergyman, if he hadn't been so "sound" (on the subject of these damned Socialists, loyalty to the Crown and so forth), I think my kindly old acquaintance might sometimes have protested. As it was, he preserved a gloomy peace while Parker "went on." Although Parker was, for the moment, chiefly engaged in seeing red, he had not forgotten the clerical duty of hating his brother "Hun." Far from it. He could sniff a "Hun" a quarter of a mile off. "Don't like the look of those people. I must investigate 'em," Parker would say, when he noticed some new arrivals who lacked that naïf and awkward truculence of demeanour which our fellow-countrymen usually assume in foreign lands. Off he would go to the hall-porters of the hotels until, sticking his long nose into a ledger, he had discovered their names, ages, and place of origin. If his suspicions proved correct, I gathered that the process of "making the place too hot to hold them" was set in motion. Imagination

shuddered at the depths of caddishness of which he could be capable. One could "see him at it" all too clearly.

I used to take deep, nauseous, but slightly intoxicating draughts of Parker. He had, as I have observed, an evil fascination, a fascination akin to that of the horrible or obscene. Heaven knows, I am no Christian. I was forced in my childhood and boyhood to endure such enormities of cruelty, hypocrisy and uncharitableness in the name of Christianity that I cannot look back upon my years of orthodoxy without a shudder, nor meet a young curate of the "earnest" type that is "good with boys," without an involuntary desire to avenge upon his person my own mistaught, harassed and ill-guided youth. All the same, since no one is so crassly stupid, whatever his own faith or lack of faith may be, as not to hold in deepest veneration the personality and the teachings of Christ—and since in all the ages of Christianity there have been numbers of sincere and simple men and women who have been helped by it to live honourable lives—it was really too much to have to listen to Parker's unblushing Satanism, his ingenious desecration of everything holy and idealistic in the faith that fed him. I believe most firmly that it is the duty of all decent people to respect other men's religions—which is my principal reason for disliking missionaries—and it enraged me to hear Parker's unconscious insults to his own. And the cheek of the man! One evening he told a story, with great gusto, of how he had got an English couple kicked out of the town. One of

their minor crimes may possibly have been that they had omitted to pay a fee to some member of Parker's profession before settling down together. Their major misdemeanour was that they subscribed to *The Nation* or *The New Statesman*, or some other serious and respectable publication which Parker chose to consider "unsound," and that they had been heard to say something "against" the British Empire. Parker described how he had hurried to the Consul, dropped a hint to the Fascisti, "passed the word" round the colony. "Got them out of the place in less than a fortnight," he concluded, rubbing his hands together in satisfaction and looking at me to see if I was going to stand him his next drink. I was not. The Quaker strains in my blood were beginning to give serious trouble. Parker as a minor Mussolini—really it was too monstrous! Then he got on to his favourite topic, the Fascisti. "There isn't a doubt in my mind that we ought to organise the country" (he meant England) "on the lines of the Fascisti," he boomed. "And, by Jove, we shall do it, too. You wait a couple of years. The British Fascisti movement is indefinitely stronger, even now, than anybody outside has any idea of."

"Is your special murder corps completed yet?" I enquired, innocently. "And if so, may one ask who is going to be your first Matteotti?—Ramsay MacDonald, Emperor Cook or one of the Communists? It would be quite a good advertisement for the English Communists if you kidnapped one of them and shot him. Nobody knows any of their names at present."

A martyr or two would be the making of the party ! ”

Parker looked at me “ old-fashioned ” like. Then he decided to bellow with laughter. He bellowed. “ Ha, ha, ha ! I don’t think any extreme measures will ever be necessary in our tight little island,” he said simply. I am no anti-semite, Heaven knows. I believe firmly that, to quote Norman Douglas, “ a Jew is as good a man as a Christian,” and very often better. But all my Jewish friends, I’m thankful to say, are marked in plain figures. I hope I shall not be misunderstood, therefore, when I mention that I caught myself wondering whether there wasn’t just *something* about Parker’s nose ! “ *Our* ” tight little island. My God, *Parker’s* tight little island !

“ These Communists,” Parker went on, “ only want a little firm handling. They’re the scum of the earth. Only in the business for what they can get. We’ve just got to show them that they’re likely to get a bit more than they bargained for, and they’ll see it doesn’t pay.”

I don’t pretend to understand Communism and, therefore, I shall not attempt to rise up as an apologist for it. But it has been described—by Professor Maynard Keynes, I believe—as having in Russia the strength of a religion, and I respect religions. To the only Communists I have met their Communism has certainly been a political religion. The Communist economic theories, I have been told, are hopelessly out of date ; and it seems evident that, put into practice, they don’t work. Also Communism, like “ State ”

Christianity, believes in the efficacy of physical force—a fact which makes impossible my own adherence to either creed. According to the newspapers, the Russian Communists have in the last few years slain or imprisoned very nearly as many people as even Christianity has ever slain or imprisoned at its more high-spirited moments. And methods of government as displayed in Bolshevik Russia, if there is any truth in what one reads about either, seem, apart from a stricter code of (relative) justice on the Bolshevik side, to be remarkably similar to those of the Fascisti. So similar, in fact, that for a “British Fascist” to abuse a British Communist is the most ludicrous example I have ever come across of the pot calling the kettle black.

“What makes you think the Communists the scum of the earth, Mr. Parker?” I enquired, as demurely as I knew how. There was a pause, as if after the fall of ten thousand bricks. The Mediterranean stopped playing games on the sand with the young lovers who walked by its twinkling baby-waves, and waited breathlessly. The stars ceased winking. Colonel Hubbard dropped his walking-stick noisily and picked it up, showing signs of blood-pressure. Parker drew a deep breath through those suspicious nostrils of his. (It became even more evident that there *was* a “something” about that nose.) His glance was worse than old-fashioned. Alas, I am no Giordano Bruno: on the other hand, there are intensities of repugnance which cast out diffidence. I felt, to be frank, that Parker could go to hell.

“May I ask if *you* are a Communist?” he

enquired, with deadly clarity of enunciation. The Colonel nearly dropped his stick again. Bless him, he loathed this sort of thing. So did I. And usually, about this time, we slipped off together to the Savoy and had one quietly, before going to bed. He'd bought another plate that he wanted to show me. Curse Communists; curse Fascisti; a plague take Parker. "Certainly," I replied; "but won't you answer my question first? I'm really anxious for information."

Parker seemed stertorous, but at the same time queerly deflated. "I should hope all right-minded people regard murderers with detestation," he snorted. "The hands of the Bolsheviks are red with the blood of innocent people."

"But aren't the Fascisti right-minded?" I enquired. "They don't seem to regard the murderers of Matteotti with any particular detestation. On the contrary. How very puzzling."

"I'm not going to bore the Major or Colonel Hubbard by arguing with you, sir," said Parker, in his most bullying voice. "It's quite evident where your sympathies lie, and that's enough for me."

"Yes, I suppose it would be," I observed sadly. But Parker had turned upon me a large, bulging, grey flannel back. I should dearly have liked to stick a large pin into it.

The poor Colonel seemed quite upset as we walked along the *passeggiata* towards the Savoy. "You've put Parker's back up, young man," he observed, "and he's rather a formidable customer. He's a sound type of man, though," he went on,

as if to reassure himself. "You can't get away from that." I wasn't going to distress the old gentleman, so near his bedtime too, by telling him precisely what I thought of Parker's "soundness." In my own mind I realised that Parker's dictatorship made the atmosphere of this little place unbreathable, and that I'd better clear out. I should like the closing scene of this story to show Parker recumbent, and myself standing in triumph by his prostrate body, with one foot upon his stomach. Alas, what a pity it is that things don't work out like that. Instead, on the following day, when the 2.30 train for Genoa puffed out of the station, it bore me with it.

GAVR' INIS

I

THE Quai d'Orsay is a bad station at the best of times. It looks imposing enough from the outside ; but within it is crowded and confusing. The trains are down in the bowels of the earth, and one can hardly breathe until one emerges from the tunnel at Austerlitz. On the summer evening when I last set off for a few weeks' holiday in Brittany it was at its very worst. The weather was frightful—black clouds, torrential rain—and the station was crowded with nervous and bedraggled holiday-makers. We were packed like sardines, in our compartment, and, outside, the subterranean platform surged with an excitable and peevish throng. When at last (after a tedious wait at Austerlitz) we began to draw away from Paris and hoped for a little fresh air and something pretty to look at, we ran straight into one of the worst storms that I can remember. The wind howled, the rain dashed against the carriage windows, it thundered, it lightened. It was nine o'clock in the evening, and on through the interminable night the storm continued. Sleep was impossible. One could not read. It was a perfect night, in short, for something really frightful in the way of French railway accidents. It was, I remembered, the season for smashes. None occurred, however, and we arrived eventu-

ally at Auray at about 5.30 in the morning, chilled to the bone, disconsolate, thoroughly wretched. Luckily the station restaurant was open to receive us, and we sat there, huddled together, waiting for daylight, drinking café-au-lait out of big round bowls.

The rain, mercifully for us, had got bored at last with doing the same thing over and over again, and left off, so that we could trudge in comfort the two kilometres to the town. It is astonishing how much of a place one can explore between half-past six in the morning and the time when reasonable people get up. Auray is an altogether charming little town on the river Loc, most of it clean, neat and with a late 17th-century dignity. In the quarter beyond the ancient bridge over the river, in the streets climbing up the hillside above the little port, are many houses of much greater antiquity. I can imagine people spending a quiet unadventurous holiday in Auray, in perfect happiness and content; but for some reason or other, perhaps because of the uncomfortable train journey, or because of the excessively thorough before-breakfast exploration, I was all anxiety to push on. The hotels, too, were full of people who had come for the great "Pardon" at St. Anne d'Auray—a *pardon* which has been painted, "written up" and photographed more frequently, perhaps, than any other.

We had noticed a rather dilapidated motor *diligence* outside the station, and finding that it started at twelve, secured seats next to the chauffeur and awaited results. We started not

Half-an-hour late, which is fairly good, and plunged along damp roads through rather treeless country-side. At the salt-studded waters of Morbihan beyond on the left-hand side, and in a few minutes we entered what proved to be the Breton emmariaquer and drew up, panting, at the *maison*. At first the village seemed so remote that we doubted whether it would be worth the visit. We found one, however, facing the Hôtel Lautram, and were very cordially received by the *patron* and his mother and as entirely unspoilt, and homely and simple. The other guests were a family consisting of a father, mother, aunt and three children—and a young married couple. They were all very simple, likeable people, who enjoyed the contrast of life in this remote village after the noise and bustle of the city. The married couple quickly and kindly took charge of us, with that disarming geniality and talkativeness which is one of the most attractive flowers of French civilisation. We must see everything! And apparently, though one would scarcely imagine it, to judge from the hotel, there were pre-historic antiquities in the village, dolmens, menhirs and tumuli, of world-wide fame. As we walked along in the wake of our friends—the sun had come out and the land and sea looked more beautiful than ever after the rain—I found myself, not for the first time, cursing my ignorance. If I had only spent a few days' hard work in the British Museum Library and acquired a little information about dolmens and those who had erected them, how

much more interesting my excursion would have been! Alas, these reflections came too late. We were shown first the famous dolmen of Mané-Lud, and crept along a passage beneath vast stones, till we reached a crude altar, that at one time must often have been red with the blood of human sacrifices. When the light of dawn fell upon the altar stone, the knife descended. It was an impressive, terrifying spot. We all uttered cliché observation as to how marvellous it was that these remote ancestors of the race had been able to move and put into position such colossal masses of stone. But archæology was not our strong suit. We all looked (I am sure) brightly intelligent, we were all impressionable and eager to be impressed, and all, alas, equally ignorant.

Locmariaquer is at the end of the peninsula of the same name, which, with that of Rhuis opposite, almost encloses the Gulf of Morbihan. This interesting stretch of water—its name means “little sea”—is about six miles long and eleven miles broad, and is studded with small islands. A steamer from Vannes runs periodically to Port Navalo and Belle-Isle, and stops at one or two of the islands on its way, but a much more amusing method of exploring them is to hire one of the small motor-boats or *vedettes* which are occasionally available, and to follow one's fancy. One sunny afternoon our energetic French friends, seeing one of these *vedettes* lying off-shore among the fishing-boats, suggested an excursion to Larmor and the island of Gavr' Inis. Monsieur André, who was sensibly dressed in a suit of

yellow pyjamas with black stripes, and wore a pair of *espadrilles* on his feet, ran to the water's edge, after having gained our ready acquiescence, and began to wave his brightly-coloured arms up and down. The skipper of the *vedette* evidently understood the signal, and came puffing along to the landing-stage. The bargain was quickly completed, and off we went across the blue-green waters of the little sea. We made first for the small village of Larmor, where the most prominent building was a large holiday home for Communist working people, founded by Jean Jaurès. It looked a pleasant place, and a number of its inhabitants were sitting about with their children on the tiny *plage*, looking very contented and happy. The village itself is a ragged and rather bleak little place, and has the indescribable "queerness" which so many Breton villages possess. This queerness, however, was nothing to the queerness of Gavr' Inis, our next objective. Gavr' Inis (the Isle of Goats) is, I believe, world-famous among antiquarians, thanks to its possession of one of the most important megalithic tumuli which are known to exist, but I cannot believe that this fact brings it more than a score or two of visitors in a year. It is in some ways one of the most perfect "play" islands imaginable for romantic children. We landed near a miniature jungle and dragged ourselves through brambles and over rocks for nearly half-an-hour in a vain search for the tumulus. At last our skipper, an elderly gentleman with a bloodshot eye, came on shore with his moustachioed and piratical-looking mate, and managed to guide us

to where, on a piece of level ground by the shore, there stood a ruinous-looking stone farmhouse, with an abandoned and still more ruinous cottage next door to it. The windows of the farm were broken, and some were boarded up. The door hung open, and the only sign that it was inhabited was the fact that a few miserable-looking chickens wandered about in front of it. In response to the skipper's shouts, however, a middle-aged woman dressed in the usual black Breton costume, with a white cap on her head, made her appearance, with two small, rather grubby-looking children hanging on to her skirts. From the farm there radiated two perfectly straight avenues of oak trees, and these avenues, with their Druidic suggestions, were more than "queer." They seemed haunted by something: but by what? Our footsteps made no sound as we walked along under the sacred trees, and conversation died away. What strange processions, in the dawn of time, had landed on the shore near where the farm now stood, and had marched up one or other of these avenues between the ancestors of the oaks that now lined them? Romantic visions flashed across the mind, of white-robed priests skilled in magic; of sacrificial victims and of rites, not yet entirely forgotten, in which the goats would play their part. The woman of the farm went back into the house, and returned with a packet of candles in her hand, and led our oddly-assorted party up one of the oak-lined avenues and across the island to the tumulus. Here we became at once miserable tourists, forced to endure discomforts in

order to "do" a sight which we could none of us understand or appreciate. With candles in our hands and bent nearly double, we scrambled along a long, damp stone-lined tunnel until we came to a circular chamber on the stone walls of which we could discern, by the flickering candle-light, some rough carvings. Only scholars could tell what these carvings were meant to represent. It would have been interesting to know, but, alas, we were a collection of ignoramuses. Certainly there was something decidedly horrible and unpleasant about the inside of that tumulus. I scrambled out again along the damp tunnel, and emerged blinking into the sunlight, relieved to have got it over. Nowadays, whenever, on an excursion, candles make their appearance, my heart sinks. The hours I have spent trudging through detestable caves, and exploring loathsome tunnels and dungeons! The agonies the tourist who sets out to see things is called upon to endure!

When we had finished our explorations we climbed up on to the top of the tumulus, where ravishing views met our eyes in all directions. The waters of the gulf were a strange shade of emerald-green, and they were dancing all round us, blown into tiny waves by the fresh breeze. The little steamer from Vannes hurried past us on its way to Port Navalo, whose white houses we could see in the distance, en route for Belle-Isle. M. André, in his yellow-striped pyjamas, danced from point to point with his camera, photographing everything that could be photographed, the skipper and his mate, ourselves, the

sky, the sea, the peasant woman, and the two friendly cows who had come up to say how-do-you do to us. It was difficult to drag ourselves away from this island of forgotten mysteries, but the breeze was freshening, and the skipper was anxious to take our money and liquidate it. So we clambered back into the *vedette*, and puffed away through the now rather choppy waters of the "little sea" towards our *apéritifs*. The island, I heard, was for sale at a fairly reasonable figure; and among the numerous islands in different parts of Europe that I have hankered to possess, Gavr' Inis has a place apart.

II

What is this "queerness" which so strongly affects one as one travels up and down the Breton coast? I know nothing comparable to it save the "queerness" of the western coast of Ireland, particularly of the coast near Galway. It is something unseizable and indefinable, something that would make even a hard-headed Senior Wrangler believe in magic. Perhaps these dolmens and menhirs have something to do with it. And the Celts are an unfathomable race, the Breton-Celts perhaps even more so than their kinsfolk in Ireland, Wales or Scotland. One feels that if one got to know them well one might discover stores of queer traditions and of secret wisdom, faithfully preserved and guarded, handed down from generation to generation since time immemorial. I know few parts of Europe where the population seem less susceptible to change,



LA TRINITÉ-SUR-MER : THE CHURCH.

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where customs, costumes and manners have been so little affected by the modern process of standardisation.

I should have liked to have lingered in Locmariaquer, but this little journey was supposed to be a walking tour, and it was not part of our programme to spend more than a few days at a time at any one place. At nine o'clock, therefore, on a misty morning which recalled the vividest memories of Ireland, we said good-bye to our genial friends and set off along the highway with our rucksacks on our shoulders. Before we started, however, we had to see one more "sight." This was the home of the official guide to the antiquities of the village, a weather-beaten veteran who had been wounded in the wars and was rewarded by a grateful country with official permission to extract the tourist's tip. His "home" consisted of a battered wooden cupboard standing naked to the elements against the wall of a ruined cottage. The sight of it convulsed M. André with laughter. He opened the cupboard door; and there, sure enough, was a pile of rags at the bottom which served as a bed, and above it a rusty coat hanging on a nail. A few knives and forks, a kettle and a dirty tin plate lay in one corner. "It's simple, it's convenient, eh?" said M. André. We met the guide himself later on, and a happier, more contented-looking character I have rarely come across. He was evidently a great favourite of M. André's, and they cracked jokes together with that unaffected ease and good-humour which sometimes makes one feel in France that the

spirit which ought to underlie the motto : " Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité " to some extent really exists.

After some hours of rather brisk walking we crossed a fine bridge over the River Crach and entered the charming little port of La Trinité-sur-Mer. Moored against the *quai* was a three-masted wooden barque, painted green, with a carved figure-head of a mermaid under her bowsprit. She looked incredibly ancient, as if she had been riding storms and plodding her picturesque way from little port to little port for at least a century. Soon, I suppose, these lovely wooden sailing-ships will have disappeared even from Brittany, the unchanging. La Trinité is on a larger scale than Locmariaquer. It has two or three comfortable-looking hotels and a steam tram which connects it with the railway line at Plouharnel. This, after an excellent and very cheap luncheon at the " Restaurant du Commerce " near its primitive station, we boarded. The tram was a very leisurely and shaky affair, but it got us eventually to Carnac and to Plouharnel. Both these places are surrounded by pre-historic remains. At Carnac is the well-known museum founded by a Mr. Miln, a Scottish antiquary of the last century, who spent much of his life excavating in the neighbourhood. For reasons I have already deplored, we did not feel impelled to explore either Carnac or Plouharnel with any thoroughness. To the uninitiated eye one menhir or dolmen is remarkably like another. It was perhaps wrong of us not to have seen the famous "*Alignements*" of Carnac, great groups of standing-stones (menhirs) arranged in the

form of a quincunx and forming nine or ten avenues. Some of these stones are said to be sixteen feet high and to weigh fifty tons. But the sun was shining and we wanted to walk to Quiberon. So, while we drank our coffee in a café at Plouharnel, we diligently read all about Carnac, and about the activities of the late Mr. Miln, in Baedeker's indispensable *Northern France*, and left it at that.

Quiberon, a *presqu'île*, at the end of a narrow isthmus, is some six or seven miles from Plouharnel, but the walk there, which is for the most part through a lovely pine-wood, is thoroughly to be recommended. At Penthievre, the narrowest part of the isthmus, is a new watering-place which has many natural attractions, and is not yet large enough to have become smart or expensive. It has a splendid *plage*, and beautiful views, and must be singularly healthy. The great fort of Penthievre, which is probably now out of date and dismantled, is passed on the right as one passes through the bottle-neck on to Quiberon. Quiberon is a queer, attractive little town, half *plage*, half fishing port. It is not at all fashionable or "overrun," and most of the summer visitors seemed to be simple middle-class French people quite prepared to do without the rather garish pleasures of La Baule or Le Croisic. Port Maria, which adjoins the more modern part of the town where the hotels and *pensions* are to be found, is a perfectly unspoiled Breton fishing port, and quite one of the most picturesque that I have seen. It was a constant delight to sit outside the Cafê de

l'Océan, above the harbour, and watch the port, crowded with brown-sailed fishing smacks, like large brown moths, and the coming and going of the fisherfolk, the girls walking arm-in-arm in parties of three or four, the men either walking in couples or sitting on the jetty, with their blue fishing-nets upon their knees. The costume of the Breton women, their high white head-dresses and black frocks trimmed with black velvet, have been made familiar by the work of artists innumerable, and need no detailed description. Contrasting with the uniformity of the women's costumes was the variety of shades in which the fishermen were clothed. Their slacks ranged in colour from crimson to orange, from dark-blue to sky-blue, and many were made with material of one shade and plentifully patched with material of another. The result was in the highest degree decorative and picturesque. The water in the port was deepest blue, the baskets of silver fish on the stone jetty glistened in the sunshine, and the deep brown sails of the fishing smacks, the brightly-coloured clothes of the fishermen, the dancing white starched caps of the women all helped to form a picture of unforgettable beauty.

The time when the port most appealed to me was between sunset and nightfall, and I remember one perfect evening which made up for all the rainy days we encountered in our trip. We sat watching the dark-sailed fishing fleet setting out across a silvery-grey sea into the sunset. On the horizon the sky was tawny red; then came long bars of grey cloud, then an expanse of golden



A ROCKY COVE AT QUIBERON.

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light, and above it pure clarity, illimitable, with here and there a small white cloud, tipped with gold, floating like an island in a fairy sea. The colours died slowly away and a sickle moon appeared and a few flickering stars. Belle-Isle lay like a long black shadow on the horizon.

I walked away from the town round the cliff's edge and listened to the eternal boom of the breakers on *les rochers sauvages*. The path was silent and deserted; the yellow lights of the various towns and villages on the *presqu'île* flickered in distant groups and made the darkness darker. When I returned to the port I came upon a big circle of people, mostly women, in an open space outside the sardine factory. They were holding hands and rhythmically moving their arms up and down, whilst shuffling slowly round to the time of a queer, harsh, melancholy chant of which the only words I could catch were "*les garçons de monâ-â-ge*." But perhaps even these I got wrong. It was an odd sight, this dance, in the dim half-light. It seemed much more the kind of thing one would have expected to come across in a savage country than in ancient, over-civilised France. There was something ritualistic, and religious, about it, and its monotonous reiteration had a queer effect on the nerves. As I watched and waited more and more people joined the circle; and when I left, towards midnight, an effect of cumulative excitement seemed to have been created. In what did it culminate, one wonders? The answer is, presumably, the obvious one; but I don't know, because I didn't wait to see.

III

The "landing at Quiberon Bay" is an incident that I remember having read about in my school days, though why this obscure tragedy should be considered important for English boys to learn about, except as an illustration of the way English Governments invariably back the wrong horse when a European country accomplishes a revolution, I cannot imagine. Our support of the French *émigrés* in 1795 was not, of course, on the same scale of lavish folly as our recent support of the White Russians under Denikin and Wrangel (over which Mr. Churchill threw away about a hundred millions of the taxpayers' money); but in its less pretentious way it seems to have been equally futile and cruel. A force of about 6,000 French Royalists were landed, under the protection of the guns of the British fleet, and marched in the direction of Auray. They were met *en route* by the Republican army under General Hoche (whose statue, by Dalou, now adorns Quiberon) and promptly and efficiently massacred. Only some 1800 of them succeeded in escaping back to the English ships. Of the rest the majority were killed in action, but about a thousand were captured and put to death. A sickening and sorry business! A sepulchral chapel was erected in 1823-9 to the memory of these unfortunates, not far from the Chartreuse d'Auray; and there is also a *Chapelle Expiatoire* on the spot where they fell.

It would be interesting to know what the present feeling is in Brittany about the rest of France in general, and the present Republican

Government in particular ; but these are matters which a foreigner has little chance of ever finding out. There appears to be a good deal of communism among the fisherfolk, and also a great deal of Breton "regionalist" sentiment. But the "pan-celts" who try to represent Brittany as a sort of French Catalonia seem to me, from what I have been able to observe after travelling in both provinces, to be talking through their *bérets*, after the absorption of several litres of *cidre bouché*. I was sorry to leave Quiberon, but it is one of the disadvantages of walking tours that one feels it necessary to walk, or at all events to keep moving. And there is also the necessity of arriving, in time, at that *poste restante* where your money is supposed (often wrongly) to be awaiting you. Of what befell me at Quimperlé and Faisrien I have written elsewhere. My little tour came to a close in the noble and dignified city of Nantes, which now, in addition to its many other charms, has the advantage of offering the English visitor excellent hotel accommodation for very little money. I had to stay at Nantes to recover from the excruciating pains and internal disorders caused by the diversions of Faisrien, pains which rendered an unbroken journey to Paris out of the question.

In the light of subsequent events, some of the rolling-stock which I observed at the station at Nantes has a rather grisly interest. I saw carriages, still in use, that had side-windows rounded like those of the old stage-coach ; and a venerable engine that looked as if it ought to have been put in a museum thirty years ago.

The journey from Nantes to Paris, though the service is fast and good, and the *wagons* comfortable enough (save for the difficulty or impossibility of getting the corridor windows open), is for the most part dull in the extreme. Anything more depressing than the vast, sparsely populated plain which lies between Vendôme and Châteaudun it would be impossible to imagine. How different that plain would look if it were part of Italy! Imagine the towns and villages that would cover it, the baroque domes that would stand out, dramatically, against the skyline! The blood seems to have been drained away from much of rural France, a fact scarcely to be wondered at, seeing that in little more than a century she has been "bled white" by three terrific wars. But can the teeming nations of Europe allow this large and fertile and delightful land, this "pleasant land of France," to remain, indefinitely, with a population numbering not more than fifty per cent. of the amount of people it could support? If not, what is going to happen? What will be the solution of the population question in France? I had not succeeded in inventing an answer to my question when I reached once more the gloomy tunnel of the Quai d'Orsay.

A L'ABRI DU PÊCHEUR

I

WHEN I look back on my visit to Faisrien, it seems to me that one of the oddest things about an odd experience is the chance that took me there. I had come up the line from Auray and had stopped at Quimperlé, enchanted by that view of the Laïta flowing between its thickly-wooded banks which you get as you cross the railway viaduct just before entering the station. Quimperlé is exceedingly picturesque, with its upper town and lower town and the narrow, breakneck street that unites them. It is full of "bits " alluring to the amateur photographer ; and it has a dullish, rather dear hotel suitable for rural deans and their wives and their nice healthy families. The delightful clear voices of English public schoolboys, all dressed in grey flannel suits, mingled with the jolly laughter of their young sisters and female cousins clad in bright jumpers and short skirts and neat brown brogues, and gave the place an odd atmosphere, difficult to describe. The English had turned the old town into the pleasantest kind of " family " resort. Charming middle-aged mothers of families sat about under the trees outside their hotel, placid and homely. Decent-looking old clerics, with a vaguely festive or sporting note introduced into their attire, sat with them, with

eyeglasses half-falling off their noses, glasses of harmless vermouth-siphon on the table in front of them, and *The Times* newspaper, three days old, in their hands. And all over the town the young things romped about—supremely confident and possessive, and behaving for all the world as if they owned it. They swarmed in and out of the shops and bought cakes and sweets and picture-postcards, took their films to be developed and generally enjoyed themselves. I felt unpleasantly middle-aged and alone and out of things, and I wanted the sea. I like the sleepy, formal little towns of France, with grey and stately 17th century houses, and a Grande Place full of shady trees planted evenly in rows, and big quiet cafés ; but I do not like them for very long at a time. There is something to me a little depressing, a little devitalised about them. I soon, therefore, had enough of Quimperlé and decided to go to the small *plage* of La Poupoule for a day or two. I left my heavy luggage at the station, packed what I needed into a rucksack, and boarded the dusty motor *diligence* which ran in conjunction with the *rapide* from Paris. Off we went, through the forest of Clohars Carnoët. The 'bus was crammed to suffocation with holiday-makers and the trailer behind it was loaded with their luggage. There was also an advertisement in the 'bus of La Poupoule, showing a picture of the usual "Palace" Hotel of the smaller French watering-place: *thé dansants*, jazz band and the rest of it. I began to grow uneasy. I didn't in the least want that kind of thing. Evidently I had made a mistake. They had told me that La Poupoule was "quite a small

place," but I realised from this advertisement that it wasn't my kind of small place. What could I do? It was already half-past nine at night. The 'bus stopped at a cross-roads, and as it waited, panting, while the conductor delivered some parcels at various cottages, I read the signpost: To La Poupoule 3 kilometres; to Faisrien 2 kilometres. In the distance, looking along the road to Faisrien, I saw the shadowy sea. I got off the *diligence* and stretched my legs. There was a small café at the corner, the kind of wooden hut that in England is usually occupied by an ex-service man. The conductor, after delivering his parcels, had entered it to drink a glass of cider. I hesitated. The driver sounded his horn. The conductor finished his drink, lit a cigarette and resumed his place on the car. The driver looked at me inquiringly. Again I hesitated, and finally I smiled and shook my head, and the *diligence* departed without me. There I was then, two kilometres from Faisrien, on a fine evening in July. The *patronne* of the little café, questioned about Faisrien as she poured out my white wine (I am no cider drinker), remarked that it was just a fishing village. She seemed doubtful as to whether I could get a room, but I might ask there "*à la Descente des Pêcheurs.*"

I started off hopefully down the road. A little moon, lying drunkenly on its back, had made its mocking appearance in the sky, and the sea breeze was caressing and gentle. All the same, those two kilometres were the longest I can remember. I came at last on one of those narrow creeks, or arms of the sea, which so

constantly indent the Breton coast. There were small white houses on either side of it, and on the narrow waterway there floated a number of fishing smacks. Nearly every house I passed was a *buvette*, but at length I reached one more imposing in size than the others, which bore over its doorway the name for which I had been told to look. I entered and inquired of an old Breton woman in sabots and white Breton cap whether I could have a room. She directed me to a long, low, ruinous-looking house adjoining her own, which had the single word "Restaurant" painted above its door. Here once more I inquired. The proprietor of the establishment was a rather frowsy, middle-aged woman, huskily voluble and evidently no Breton. Her assistant, the cook, was a little brown-eyed creature who hobbled about as if she had two left feet. The two women were sitting in the *salle-à-manger* when I arrived, drinking Benedictine by the light of an oil lamp. Both were a little tipsy. A hasty glance at the walls betrayed a collection of the sort of dreadful daubs which would-be artists have left behind them in nearly every Breton fishing village, and I guessed that I had stumbled on one of those "artists' colonies" where you can live for half a crown a day, about which indifferent painters, on their return to Montparnasse or to Chelsea, speak in such romantic terms. Yes, a room was vacant. Would Monsieur like to see it? I was led by candle-light up a wooden staircase, and down a long passage to a large apartment containing two double beds. There was no carpet on the floor and no



FADSKEN.

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furniture, apart from the beds, except a table, a washstand, and a broken chair. But the room was clean enough, and I was thankful to have found it. The window looked on to the narrow harbour where the fishing boats lay. On the other side of the water lights shone out from the houses, and from one of them there came the sound of a mechanical piano and a noise of shuffling feet. Dancing, evidently.

I left my things on the bed and went down to investigate Madame. Would she have a drink with me ? She would. Madame's special poison, designated "Fine Champagne," was produced, with a siphon. She herself, wisely, stuck to Benedictine. No ; there were not many people in Faisrien this year. Usually her house was always quite full in the summer. She had a flat in Paris, but came here every year from April till the end of September. Her terms were sixteen francs a day, except in July and August, when she had to charge 20 francs ! She promised me plenty of lobsters, and excellent fried fish : she kept a generous table. On the other side of the water ? Oh, there was no one there, except some English. They were friends of Monsieur, perhaps ? I reassured her. I knew no one at Faisrien, had never, indeed, heard of the place until two hours ago. She proceeded to tell me about "*les mauvais anglais*" who lived together in a house on the other bank of the creek and spent all their days in the *buvette* with the mechanical piano. They seemed to amuse her. There was "*le poète, qui ne fait jamais des poèmes,*" and "*le gros monsieur,*" and an ex-commander of a submarine and sundry

ladies. Madame was not concerned about their morals—her own profession, in early life, it was all easy to guess at—but she was consumed with curiosity to know whether they lived in pairs, or, so to speak, in group formation. I felt half inclined to cross at once and investigate these “*mauvais anglais*,” so greatly had my curiosity been whetted. But it was getting late and I was tired. So bidding Madame good-night, I went out and walked up the road to the little white lighthouse and had a look at the sea. I felt oddly excited and exhilarated and expectant. It was a queer place; Madame was queer, and I had a shrewd suspicion that “*les mauvais anglais*” would be queerer still.

II

On the following morning, after swallowing a bowl of rather nasty café au lait, and eating a morsel of sour bread and salt butter, I walked down the inclined slope of the *quai*, to the water's edge, and called “*Passage*.” After a time a flat-bottomed boat appeared from behind one of the fishing smacks. It was propelled by an oar twisted to and fro in the stern rowlock by an elderly ferryman with bushy, black moustaches. He was dressed in a bright blue canvas suit, very much patched, and regarded me with gloomy disapproval. I got in, followed by a small boy carrying a basketful of silvery fish and a young fisherman who held a large crab in either hand. The fisherman was put aboard his smack, *Les Deux Communistes*, and the small boy and I proceeded to the opposite shore. I had climbed

a flight of slippery stone steps and was proceeding up a steep and stony village street when I saw a man coming towards me, a strange and unforgettable figure that seemed, somehow, familiar. His dark, greying hair was mostly standing on end; he wore an ancient silk shirt, intended to go with a collar, wide open at the neck, and nondescript trousers. His bare feet were stuck into a pair of dilapidated *espadrilles*, and like my late friend Edward (whose story I have recorded elsewhere) he was faithful to a monocle. His feet, as he descended the hill, seemed to describe half-circles, as if he were trying to tie them into knots. It seemed impossible that he should keep his balance.

We met; we stopped; we looked at one another; and both of us exclaimed simultaneously, "Good Lord!" Could it be? It was. Of all unlikely people to encounter in a Breton fishing village, it was Alistair. I had not seen Alistair for a couple of years. The last time I encountered him was in a select resort, full of rich, fruity types, known as the "Circolo Sportivo Italiano." The club, whose whereabouts I will not reveal, was at one time a popular meeting-place, between the hours of three and half-past five in the afternoon, of members of an esoteric suicide club, who, finding the post-war world a pointless sort of place, were anxious to leave it as cosily as possible. I used to go there as a kind of "rescue" worker, in pursuit of a friend who would *not* get on with a book for which his publishers were clamouring. I shall never forget that smoky back room with the green

baize tables, nor the spectacle of Alistair sitting huddled in his chair, unconscious and at peace, while his angry companion hissed to the company at large: "What am I to do with this dee-gen-errrr-ate arr-eeeto-crat?"

"Put him in a cab and send him home," seemed the obvious reply. Alistair, gentlest and sweetest of inebriates, surrendered himself like a tired child to his nurse, and, supported by my arm, tottered obediently to the car. His friend, still declamatory about "degenerate aristocrats," went with him. That was the last, as I imagined, that I was likely to see of Alistair. And here he was again.

"I really feel like death this morning," he observed with a shiver, when we had shaken hands and remarked, "How did you get here?" and so forth. "Won't you come into our pub? A gin fizz is absolutely imperative. Thank God, we've got some. It arrived yesterday." He led the way up some stairs into a low, dark café called "A l'Abri du Pêcheur," overlooking the harbour—it was the café with the mechanical piano—and sank on to one of the rush-bottomed stools. "Madame Adrienne," he groaned, "two hubidges avec capivvy, for the love of God. Oh, what is it? Du gin, deux oranges, siphon? I always have the most frightful aphasia in the early morning. Can't talk French or English or anything else."

Madame Adrienne, a tall and handsome young woman, with twinkling brown eyes, pale freckled cheeks and dazzling white teeth, had already set about providing "Monsieur Aleestaire" with his

requirements. Her flowing white Breton cap and voluminous black skirts suited her to perfection. Like all the village women, she wore no stockings and her neat bare ankles, as she moved about the café, looked most enticing. In the house she wore carpet slippers over which she put on wooden sabots when she went abroad. She laid the oranges, the gin bottle and the siphon on the table between us, with a caressing, almost motherly, gesture. I could see that her heart was touched by "Monsieur Aleestaire."

When Alistair had consumed two ample gin fizzes *à l'orange*, his hands ceased to tremble, and he was able to light a cigarette without burning the end of his nose. He beamed at me benignly and I gathered that he now felt strong enough to tell me all about it. Apparently he had spent most of the time which had elapsed since our last meeting in Montparnasse. He did not seem very certain on the point; but he thought it must have been Montparnasse. Then in the spring he and his friend Hugo—the one who had called him a "dee-generrrate arrr-isto-craat" in the Circolo Sportivo—had decided to go for a walking tour in Brittany. Again Alistair was vague as to details. Somehow or another they had reached Quimperlé, and in the hotel sacred to rural deans they had found themselves penniless and in pawn. There was nothing for it but to go on drinking the proprietor's wines and *apéritifs* and wait for something to turn up. "We were just going to be thrown into gaol or handed over to the consul, when Tilly and P. B. arrived—you'll see them in a moment. They turned up

with a lot of luggage, two dogs and a large bird-cage with a dead canary in it. They more or less took charge of us and kept the proprietor at bay until I got a cheque from home and paid the bill. Hugo went back to Paris, and the rest of us, by some accident or other, discovered this place and found rooms with a most sympathetic couple who let us have the run of the house and do exactly as we like. Then I must tell you that Tilly's school friend Anna arrived, and after her a sort of Russian hanger-on of Anna's called Ovna—you know, it's really one of those names like Elena Mikhailovna : quite impossible. After that we rescued Bird from the clutches of a mad-drunk who used to cut her head open with bottles : a nasty kind of fellow. She's been chucking blinds ever since, to get over him. Finally there's Binks, who's a most useful chap. He gets our gin for us. He used to be in the Guards, and got wounded five times during the war. . . ."

"And you are all under the same roof?" I asked. "Yes, we've got the whole house," replied *le poète*. "Monsieur and Madame Pierre and the old aunt and the two children have moved out into a stable at the back, which they share with their goats."

"How long have you all been here?" I inquired. "Oh, since April," said Alistair. "As we've none of us any money to speak of, except Binks, it looks as if we shall be here for ever."

One by one this strange, forlorn community of waifs and strays trickled into the pub for their morning corpse-revivers. First of all came Bird,

a tall, dark-haired Yorkshire girl with pale, rather distraught, blue eyes. She was dressed in a frock of a bright shade of terra-cotta, made off the same material that the fishermen used for their slacks, which she called her "sardine-suiting." Bird's drink was *anis*, with a glass of brandy in it and a spot of water. "Oh, my God," she said. "Last night *was* awful!" P. B. came in next. He was very much the ex-naval-officer type; pensioned, fifty per cent. disabled, and, like thousands of his brothers in misfortune, permanently at a loose end. There was nothing for him to do; he was discharged unfit; and you can't live in England on a pension of about thirty bob a week. Tilly came next, dressed in a pair of Alistair's silk pyjamas and a raincoat. She was a small, vivacious, witty and very attractive creature. In her own way I guessed that she, too, was one of the victims of the war. Defiantly she seemed to ask the world the question: What's the good? Anna was a quiet, rather lymphatic girl who had evidently never outgrown a schoolgirl infatuation for Tilly. Ovna, with her round, pasty face and round brown eyes, was the "inevitable Russian" from Montparnasse. She had an enormous appetite for food, drank milk and water, and translated Russian books into French. She seemed mildly amused at everything, but never spoke. She was there and yet not there. Finally, the party was completed by Binks. There came a shout from the street: "Ha-ha! Berlud!" and the next moment the figure of the enormously tall ex-guardee was darkening the doorway. He had on a khaki shirt, a pair of grey shorts,

stockings with smart leather garters and very neat brown brogues. A gold-rimmed monocle was screwed into his left eye. I had always supposed guardsmen to be mostly fools, either very aristocratic and heroic, or else the too shiny sons of plutocratic fathers, and the few specimens I had encountered outside the pages of Ouida scarcely deserved an appellation so polite. Binks had a particularly vapid smile. It was some days before I realised that this smile was simply a cunning disguise. For if Binks had carried his accomplishments about with him, marked in plain figures, he would have been insufferable. He remains in my memory as, without any exception, the most efficient man I have ever come across. He talked, both fluently and correctly, French, German and Italian. He could adapt himself, easily, to any company. His clothes, shoes and all his belongings were invariably in the most perfect order. He could drink anybody under the table. Although he had been cut open and sewn up again on several occasions, and was not supposed to bathe, he went in one day and beat our crack swimmer with ease. He never seemed to be tired; and as a popular entertainer, a one-man turn, he was unsurpassed. To an appreciative audience he could talk nonsense for hours at a time. And when Alistair pulled the remains of his intellect together and amused himself by trying to talk sense, Binks's staggering reserves of knowledge, carefully kept under the counter, induced a respect which in Alistair's case came near to adulation. One bond in common Binks had with the rest of the party, however—

he was not burdened with anything that could be termed a "moral sense," and—the war being over and his career as a soldier at an end—there was absolutely nothing that he could think of to do.

"You see, it's like this," Alistair once remarked. "We don't want to do anybody any harm. We just want to be let alone. We live here, in comfort, on £1 a week each, and we amuse the natives. You wouldn't find a convent, or any other moral or religious community, living together as happily as we do. We don't pinch each other's things, we aren't jealous, we never have rows. We get on perfectly. None of us cares very much if he lives or dies. We are much happier here than we should be anywhere else. We can't help being the sort of people we are, can we? In London, the community would persecute us. Especially the patriots who enjoyed the jolly old war so much. London has a moral sense—a most uncomfortable thing. We haven't any, unless Ovna possesses a Russian one. Ours got 'shot off at Mons,' or, at all events, didn't survive the recent disturbances. We don't want to be rescued, or reformed, or made to work, or sent to teetotal nursing-homes, or messed about. Why should we be? What for? What good would it do us or anyone else? We only want to be let alone, and left in peace."

III

For a community whose sole occupation was the consumption of alcohol, *les mauvais anglais* lived strenuous and exciting lives. "My dear chap," said Binks one day, "you think that just

because you sit in your room at that old procur-ess's pub on the other bank, slog away at some book for an hour or two every morning, and go for a walk in the afternoon, that you really work. Why, *we* keep at it every day, from ten till two!" It was true; they did. In their intervals for rest and solid refreshment after their toils, they gathered round the deal table in their communal dining-room at Madame Pierre's and endeavoured to eat. One couldn't imagine a scene more harmless or more homely than their luncheon-table. All round them, on the walls, were dreadful daubs painted by previous tenants of the house. They themselves were innocent of any such crimes. None of their party had ever made a sketch, nor did they even write letters. (At moments of acute emergency, they despatched telegrams.) On the hearth, keeping watch over her family, sat a large, reddish-yellow sheep-dog named Mees. By her were her two pups, one black and one yellow, whose names, originally Hamlet and Omelette, had been reduced to Amlet and Omlet. Muffin, a little cockney, rough-haired terrier, noted for his swimming exploits, sat with expectant nose by his mistress's chair. Through the open window there was a vista of green garden and blue sky, with Madame Pierre's goats grazing peacefully in the foreground. You couldn't imagine a more idyllic scene, or a better-behaved or more agreeable set of people. If one of them was too exhausted by his or her exertions in the intensive consumption of apéritifs to tackle any food, he or she retired unobtrusively to bed. Nothing

could have been more good-humoured and refined.

The "*mauvais anglais*" threw themselves whole-heartedly into all the local festivities. What would the dances "*A l'Abri du Pêcheur*" have been like without the sylph-like grace of Tilly, of Anna, and of Bird? How would the fisherboys, without their aid, have learnt the delights of tango and of jazz? And when the older fishermen assembled at the pub to sing their interminable Breton songs the "*mauvais anglais*" were always there in force to stand a round of cider to the singers and their audience.

At the Faisrien Regatta, a little cottage overlooking the harbour was put at the disposal of the distinguished visitors; and Madame Adrienne's brother maintained for them a constant supply of brandies and sodas. They entered heartily into the general gaiety. They bought little swishy canes and ticklers and bright green sweets from the stalls; they hailed youth and beauty with roguish smiles of enticement and shouts of welcome; they applauded the winners of the races; they stood the manager of the sardine factory a drink. In their unassuming, unpretentious way they were veritable outposts of Empire. What would the Regatta, or Faisrien itself, for that matter, have been without them? Half the gossip of the little place centred round their acts and deeds. . . .

Certainly, it was not for me to throw up my hands in horror or disgust. I am inclined to believe that every individual who has no occupation and no dependants has an inalienable right

to end his life, if he wishes to, in any way he pleases. And no one is so degenerate, so degraded, so drunken, but has some qualities which it is the custom to label "good"—qualities of heart or mind or spirit, which the more naïf and charming of the saints, S. Francis of Assisi, for example, would have but little difficulty in recognising. There was no bile or spleen about *les mauvais anglais*; they were not ambitious, grasping or cruel: they were merely to the *nth* degree futile, and emotionally exhausted. The world had been too much for them. They had retired from it.

IV

I must tell you about "Mees." She was a dog whose face wore an expression of gloomy sagacity, like a police inspector. She had one of those large, muscular, expressive tails that knock chairs over and lash the floor in a disciplinary manner. "Mees" was a great disciplinarian, firm but kindly. When her charges were "chucking a blind" of too generous dimensions, her great tail would go slap, slap among the tables and chairs until she had got them on their feet and out into the street. Her sheep-dog strain gave her a passion for "rounding up." She would never rest until the whole flock, with no exception, was safely inside the fold. My habit of shouting "*Passage*" at eleven o'clock, and making my way to the other side of the harbour, caused her exquisite uneasiness as soon as she got to know me. On one occasion she took a flying leap into the boat, crossed with me, mounted to

my bedroom, and sat looking at me with reproachful eyes, banging the floor with her tail in a frenzy of anxiety. I had the greatest difficulty to persuade her to go home. For the first four weeks after Amlet and Omlet were born she was a most careful mother. Growls protected her offspring from the petting of strangers, and sometimes she would leap at people of whom she was suspicious, pushing them away with her forepaws and making snapping noises. There was no more vice in her than there is in the police-sergeant who backs his well-trained horse into a crowd. She was responsible and disciplinary—that was all. But after a time she grew not only bored with Amlet and Omlet, but extremely jealous of them. If they were too much petted, she would stalk angrily round the room, roughly pushing her long nose under people's arms, demanding the caress to which her age and her many virtues entitled her. I called one morning *chez* Madame Pierre, and walking up through the sleeping house, came to the room which *le poète* shared with the sailor. Both had been much fatigued with wine on the previous evening, and they had collapsed on the floor in an effort to put each other to bed. Mees was there on guard, gloomy and official as ever. She had slowly and methodically licked as much of them as she thought it appropriate to lick. She could do no more after that than keep watch.

Muffin was an animal of an altogether different type from Mees. He was a cunning little cockney guttersnipe of a rough-haired terrier, with innumerable tricks, but—like his mistress,

perhaps—a sadly defective moral sense. He was the fastest-swimming dog I have ever seen, and it was a wonderful sight to watch him leap into the harbour after his ball, dash for it like a streak of lightning, and bring it back to shore. He was taken into Quimperlé one day to lunch *chez* Monsieur Jérôme—he of the sleek black hair and the imposing rotundity of figure. During the meal he disappeared ; and though the town crier cried for him at every street corner he was not to be discovered. Two days later, at ten o'clock at night, he knocked at Monsieur Jérôme's door and, as *le patron* expressed it, demanded a night's lodging—in a strong British accent ! For the rest, he was a quarrelsome, obstreperous little beast, with no manners at all. He greatly disliked the interminable songs of the old fishermen, and after ten minutes or so would express his boredom by a burst of harsh and ill-tempered barking which had to be hastily smothered. I shall always connect the sound of Tilly's hand spanking Muffin's unrepentant body with my memories of those strange, harsh songs.

v

It was time for me to go. For one reason, Alistair, whom I had brought over with me to the “restaurant” for luncheon, had struck abject terror into the cook. He had fixed his monocle into his eye and turned upon her a glassy stare when she hobbled in with the fish. Growling horribly, he had demanded a goat, *all white, sans taches . . . pour des mystères !* It must be brought immediately !



MERRIEN.

[Facing page 187.]

The poor woman shrieked and fled. Alistair had once dabbled in black magic, and in his less coherent moments he was apt to come out with these disconcerting demands. He had a great desire to see what the Devil was like, and never would heed my assurances that he would discover quite quickly enough, and would be lucky if he did not see an army of devils—and serpents as well: green ones. What would have been a harmless pleasantry in Montparnasse was a more serious business in Brittany, particularly within sight of the Ile de Groix—the Isle of the Sorceresses. The Bretons don't chatter about black or any other magic: they know things. The little cook with the brown eyes and the two left legs never recovered from her shock, and ever afterwards included me in her displeasure. . . .

And then I was beginning to catch the vocabulary of *les mauvais anglais*, beginning to order “verres de hubidge avec capivvy,” to talk about “chucking blinds,” “registering gent,” “making a tea gesture,” and so forth. Almost everything that was not “registered” was a “gesture.” One felt one's brain was being eroded. And I had explored the wild and rocky coast pretty thoroughly. I had walked several times southwards to La Poupoule (each time thanking my stars that I had not gone there originally), and northwards to the tiny fishing ports of Merrien and Brigneau. I had explored the forest of Clohars, and had visited the long, straggling village of Clohars Carnoët (for cigarettes) and the more compact and less inviting village of Moëlan (for aspirin). I had had

enough. The glasses of hubidge and capivvy—in other words, Picon-Curaçoa—that I had to consume did not agree with me. I was insufficiently case-hardened, I suppose. And I had taken a mild dislike to the Bretons. After living in a country where all the public services are scrupulously punctual, where every one who makes an appointment keeps it, the vagueness of the Breton was exasperating. For example, if you wanted to go into Quimperlé by the fish *camion*, and were told that it would start at eight, you would be lucky to get off by half-past nine. And whoever else got drunk, it seemed to me that the postman, at least, might wait until his round was over, before passing out. This individual, who swayed up and down the country roads on his dilapidated bicycle, had been continuously drunk for over five years. It was very amusing until you found that he delivered your letters, those that he did deliver, five days late.

On one occasion he handed me the entire post for the commune, and then collapsed with dignity on to a pile of stones by the roadside.

It was, undoubtedly, time to go. On the night before my departure I crossed the harbour, for the last time, to bid farewell to *les mauvais anglais*. There was hardly any water in the creek, owing to the exceptionally low tide, and I had to go slipping and sliding across the mud to where the ferryman waited for me. Madame Adrienne's pub, when I reached it, was crammed with fisherboys in "sardine suitings" of various shades of colour ranging from pale blue to

brightest scarlet. Some were dancing, others sat on the low rush-bottomed stools drinking cloudy, orange-coloured cider out of thick tumblers. A haze of grey smoke hung over everything, and I had some difficulty in finding my compatriots. Their table was in a far corner of the long low room, abominably close to the piano. They looked rather jaded, I thought; as if their drinks, instead of enlivening them, had given them indigestion. Alcohol is a notoriously capricious poison. Alistair made an effort to shout through the noise, then gave it up. What he tried to say was, I think, "I wish we hadn't finished all the gin." I suggested that they should move to the *boulangerie*, higher up the street, where there was more room and less row. But this, it seemed, was impossible. Madame Adrienne would not like it. "The Lord only knows what we owe her," Bird groaned. Poor dears, they couldn't have changed their habits, even if they had wanted to! There isn't much freedom, in this world, alas, for the insolvent. I said good-bye to them; and crossed the water again in a mood of depression. It was a starry, moonlit night, and there was a cool breeze blowing in from the sea. The fishing fleet would set out at dawn—the *Reine des Flots*, the *Vive Jaurès*, *Les Deux Communistes* and all the rest of them—and the uneventful life of the village would go on as it had gone on for generations. But what about—I couldn't help asking myself the question—what about *les mauvais anglais*? What the dickens would *they* do in three months' time?

The next morning, when I was about to take my place in the fish *camion*, en route for Quimperlé, Bird, in her sardine suiting, turned up to bid me farewell. She looked unhappy, and extremely ill, and gave me some small commissions to do for her in London.

"What's going to become of you all," I asked, "when autumn is here? Where are you all going to?"

Her pale grey-blue eyes looked, for a moment, distraught with horror, and anxiety.

"We *don't know*," she said. "We *none* of us know!"

Le poète, in his thin silk shirt and frayed trousers, had come upon us unperceived. Twirling his monocle and laughing, he observed in his velvety baritone:

"After all, Bird, as we none of us particularly care, it doesn't so very much matter. . . . Does it?"

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

I

THERE are certain places one has never visited about which one has heard so often and so much that clear pictures of them have formed themselves in the mind, pictures so vivid and complete that one hesitates to destroy them. Blackpool, Toledo, Lima, Huddersfield, Granada, for example, are towns which I should be shy of visiting in the flesh. Toledo, Lima,—why, in imagination, I have spent months in both these cities! In the Byronic period of my youth I indulged in a romantic *affaire* at Granada; while in the ultra-realistic period which followed and corrected it, I staged a whole drama in Huddersfield and Blackpool. It was all about a mill-hand and it bore a suspicious resemblance to *Hindle Wakes*. A year or two ago I actually came within striking distance of Toledo, but for some reason or another I hesitated. A sort of fear came over me. Supposing Toledo wasn't true? *My* Toledo is *perfectly* true; and so long as I do not exchange it for the one on the map, nobody can ever deprive me of it. Had I the courage to risk the exchange? That was the question. In any case, I didn't, on that occasion, risk it.

To the list of places familiar to me in imagination but never visited, I might until recently have added Margate, and above all, Southend!

In the case of Southend the exchange of the imaginary for the real was entirely in my favour. For it does in truth "beggar imagination," it "beats belief," it is all that I or anyone else could ever possibly have thought it was, and lots more beside. I doubt if England can produce any place that is richer, riper, *juicier* than Southend. It does the heart good merely to think of it. Just fancy being the *Mayor of Southend*! Could any position be more fantastically thrilling and delicious? The approach to this pearl of towns is made in all the circumstances of romance. One Sunday morning in June I took a 'bus into the deserted City and boarded the good ship *Crested Eagle*, from the Old Swan Pier. She is a large paddle-boat, built to accommodate a horde of passengers, and she was packed with East-Enders, all of whom were as excited as I was myself. The East-Enders, at all events, does not take his pleasures sadly. We were off at last, swooping down the river through the lifting mist. No sooner had we left the pier than the corks flew from about five hundred bottles of Bass, and their contents were poured down as many thirsty throats. What sighs of gratified relief, what wipings of the mouth with the backs of hands! On the upper deck the chocolate-sellers and the boys with fruit-baskets were doing a roaring trade. The Sunday newspapers also were unusually succulent that morning. One of those "Society" divorce cases was in progress which are reported in columns and columns of scabrous detail. How the hard-working and virtuous East-End mother enjoyed her justifiable revel in

sin at second-hand ! “ Whatever she done,” said Mrs. Alf, munching and reading with equal voracity, “ ’e didn’t ought to ’ave treated ’er like *that*.”

We were nearing Greenwich. There was Greenwich Hospital on our right, and the Observatory bulging up queerly from among the trees on the hill above it ; and there was the hotel, by the pier, to which Cabinet Ministers used to drive on Sundays, in the ’forties and ’fifties, to eat oysters and whitebait. To find the real London nowadays, the London which is the capital of England and not the “ hub of Empire,” you have to come East and descend our river. Greenwich has far more of the true London flavour—that inimitable, indescribable “ something ” which it takes the genius of a Dickens or a Marie Lloyd to capture and reveal—than has the Strand or the re-built Regent Street. On we went, after stuffing a few more hundreds of passengers on to our already crowded decks. The sun was shining brightly now, bringing out all the colour in the brown sails of the barges that, in couples, made their graceful way upstream. We passed Dagenham, with its tiny beach covered with paddling children, and its queer wild stretch of “ undeveloped ” land overgrown with giant cow-parsley, enormous sorrels and thistles, and stunted trees, and purple mallows. (But I must not give away the secrets of Dagenham ; it has its romantic surprises for the explorer hardy enough to discover them.) We swept by Purfleet with its solid, dignified and intensely English-looking Royal Hotel, that might have been

erected in the year of Trafalgar, so well does its architecture accord with the old training-ship, relic of the Nelson era, which is moored near-by. A few minutes more and we were in sight of Gravesend on the one side and Tilbury on the other. The huge funnels of monster-liners could be seen behind the Tilbury station hotel, and in the foreground was the old fort which gave such a feeble account of itself when the Dutch fleet sailed up the Thames on that memorable occasion when poor old John Bull had the shock of his life. On the Gravesend side one could see the trees of the old Rosherville Gardens, the last descendant of the Vauxhalls and Cremornes of an earlier age. It is now, alas, no longer famous for shrimp teas and innocent delights.

Positively, we were beginning to smell the sea. The river was broadening into an estuary. Soon we should be there! Excited groups crowded into the bow of the ship and scanned the horizon for the beloved, the sacred pier. I was completely infected by the general excitement. At last, at last, with my very own eyes, I was going to see Southend. When the pier came in sight there was a general bustle and commotion. Shrill maternal voices cried, "'Ere, Bert, come 'ere." Families were marshalled and collected by anxious mothers; while fathers hastily swallowed their last half-pints.

II

The moment I set foot upon the pier at Southend the whole stupendousness of the place was revealed to me as in a flash. It really *was* true. The pier itself, is a very prince of piers. It must

be a mile long, at least, perhaps longer, and a toy railway hurries the impatient excursionist from one end of it to the other. From the first moment that one emerges from the pier into the town, the fun begins. The odour of the whelks and winkles, wafted from a dozen open-air booths, is perhaps the first thing which attracts the visitor's attention. Many of my fellow-voyagers, as soon as the familiar and to them delicious smell assailed their nostrils, made a dash for the stalls, which were soon doing a roaring trade. And the fact that there was no R in the month had no terrors whatever for East-End lovers of the "succulent bivalve." Baskets full of oysters were opened and swallowed in the hot June sunshine. Those who didn't patronise the shell-fish stalls bought sticks of striped "Southend Rock," or allowed themselves to be hustled by relentless and rather bibulous chauffeurs into motor char-à-bancs. The energy of the place was simply terrific ; it was shattering. I imagine there must be more things that you can do for sixpence or a shilling in Southend than in any other place in England. Before I had been a quarter of an hour on shore I found myself, much to my own astonishment, sitting in a char-à-banc, tightly wedged in between two ladies of generous proportions and the most ear-splitting good-humour. We were going, or so it appeared from an inscription in chalk upon a blackboard, for a superb tour through the beauty-spots of south-east Essex. The chauffeur, who, I fancy, owned the car, was evidently a licensed wag. His sallies produced the most excruciating spasms of

bowel-twisting laughter among his clients. The darlings, with that heart-warming abandonment to mirth which constitutes for the Cockney something very like an armour against Fate, really did "laugh until they nearly died." Our humourist, however, had not yet sprung his best joke on us. At last we got under weigh, and spun along hard, shining roads, smooth as a dinner-table, between lines of red-brick villas. When we left the villas behind, the country still had the rather dusty, sophisticated look of urban Essex. A mile or two further and we should, as I happened to know, get into quite charming scenery and reach villages pleasant to look upon on a June morning. But that was where the chauffeur's supreme joke came in. Our destination was only a hideous red-brick pub, barely out of sight of Southend! Here we waited a quarter of an hour, while driver and passengers slaked their thirst. When we crowded back again on to the car an optimistic photographer proceeded to make our jaunt historic by taking photographs of us. The fat ladies were ecstatic. Little Gertie was held up, like a rag doll, before the eye of the camera, and was afterwards very sick. This jaunt occupied about an hour. And there were hours and hours and hours before the *Crested Eagle* was due to reappear to take us home. Food of some kind or another seemed indicated, and I explored a vast grill-room where a band, composed of three relentless young ladies of the Jewish persuasion, belaboured their respective musical instruments in a way which indicated muscular development of no ordinary

kind. The meat, also, was high: but the waiter's intense, his heart-felt sympathy quite made up for this little accident. "I told them so. . . . I told them so, sir, in the kitchen. I didn't quite like to warn you against it, seeing as how you seemed set on a bit o' steak, like. . . ." He was quite perfect. To be waited on by an English waiter is a rare and, as a rule, a delightful, experience. For an Englishman, exiled for the greater part of the year, to hear once more the caressing, sympathetic, good-humoured voice of an authentic "William" or "Henry" is an experience which surely renders sentiment excusable. How few there are of them left! It was just like Southend to produce a perfect specimen. Visions of dead waiters—ah, where are the waiters of yesteryear?—flashed before my mind as this last of many Williams commiserated with me. I thought of an old friend at "The Cock," and of that incorrigible old sportsman who once flourished at Stone's, in Panton Street, who never failed to make one's steak and pint of Burton the more enjoyable by giving one a tip for tomorrow's races. Tip for Tip was the old gentleman's motto; and it was not at all a bad one in that London that has now so nearly disappeared. There was a character, too, at "The Sceptre," an old English eating-house with mahogany pews that is now, alas, only a memory cherished by a faithful few. "The Sceptre" used to stand within fifty yards of the back door of the Café Royal, and it was a great place in its day. Thackeray frequented it in the 'fifties, and Swinburne a little later. Its cooking remained

obstinately English, and until the end it maintained the excellence of its port. London has so very few English restaurants left that the closing of "The Sceptre" was a real misfortune and to me a source of keen regret. Why it is that in the capital of England it is so hard to obtain plain and wholesome English food and be waited on by one's fellow-countrymen I cannot imagine, unless the explanation is that there are so few Englishmen left who can afford to enter a restaurant at all. For if we are not overwhelmed by the "Argentine, the Portuguese and the Greek," the assertive Celt has at all events triumphed over us and robbed us even of any sense of our own nationality. Nearly every "Englishman" I know is either an Irishman, a Welshman or a Scot. And how they boast about their respective countries! One wonders why on earth they ever exchanged them for poor benighted England, for which they express so much contempt. The Irish are perhaps the worst in this respect. But then, as the biggest bluffers in the world's history, they would be. How this essentially second-rate, superficially charming, mean, brave, treacherous and rather brutal people has succeeded in making the whole world accept it at its own valuation is one of the great romances of "publicity." Any history of the art of advertising ought to begin with a chapter about Ireland. I imagine that almost the only people that the Irish have never taken in are Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. W. B. Yeats. But then, Yorkshiremen are proverbially hard-headed. The Welsh are scarcely less lyrical about themselves and their country than the

Irish, and phrases about dawn on the Welsh mountains fall glibly enough from their lips. But how often does one hear an Englishman go into rhapsodies about sunset on the Essex marshes, or dawn upon the Sussex downs? However, perhaps ours is the better way, for if we cannot ourselves be articulate about our country, there is always a supply of Bellocs and of Chestertons to be it, admirably, for us.

III

The day was only beginning. There were any number of things waiting to be done. For most of the younger visitors it was now the hour of love and sleep. All over the public gardens lay enlaced couples, silent, motionless, half-somnolent, half-ecstatic. The Bishop of London would, I am sure, have been highly shocked at the sight which they presented: and most foreigners, unused to our ways, would have been, to say the least, surprised. This kind of thing is managed, perhaps, in a more practical fashion in France. But the Londoner's temperament is essentially different from that of his Parisian neighbour. I strongly doubt whether any section of the community is sounder, more moral and more fundamentally decent than the hard-working people of the East-End. And the East-End girl who, following the fashion of her kind, indulges in a little innocent love-making with the general public to act as chaperon, would probably be shocked and indignant if she discovered what prurient-minded ecclesiastics thought of her proceedings. I have often noticed in Kew Gardens

that, although there are many parts of the Gardens which are unfrequented and offer discreet seclusion to the amorous, it is always in the most crowded avenues that the billing and cooing takes place. This seems to argue a sense of propriety quite Victorian in its strictness. The East-End undoubtedly has its code of manners and behaviour, a code evolved to suit the special circumstances and conditions of life in small and crowded homes, and it is probably more rigidly adhered to than is the code of the upper classes.

The crowds not occupied in the important business of love-making surged up and down "the front," hired rowing-boats, went for sails in yachts, got into char-à-bancs, paraded up and down the gigantic pier, listened to the band, ate things out of paper bags, laughed or gaped at the Pierrots, guffawed at the comic nigger with the banjo, or sat upon seats in the sunshine, placid, vacant, rather speechless, but perfectly happy. It was quite frightening to think how hard they must have worked during the week in order to have earned such a capacity for simple enjoyment. I made numberless good resolutions, because for me, alas, the time was not passing quite so quickly as it was for them. And yet how good it was to be home again, in England, after many months of exile, and how delightful to be able to watch the ships entering or leaving that sweet "Themmes," which to the Londoner must always be at once the most sacred and the most romantic of all the rivers in the world. For the Thames is no less sweet when, full-grown, it merges with the sea at Southend, bringing with

it its great ships and its vast fleets of barges, tugs, and tramps, than it is when, as a "stripling," it brims so gently through the meadows of Eynsham and of Bablock Hythe. At the Thames mouth there is something exciting and adventurous in the air. Generation after generation of roving islanders, setting out for travel, trade, fighting or exploration, must have thrilled with anticipation at this very point, where sea and river meet.

A large red motor omnibus upset my reflections by coming to a panting full-stop just in front of me, and since I am nothing if not willing to oblige, I climbed on to it and away we went to the riverside town of Grays. Grays is a queer old place, embedded in a ring of new workmen's dwellings, villas and factories. What charmed me most about it was a muddy creek and wharf, where barges innumerable clustered, some aground in the mud of the creek, others moored in main stream. The barges were splendid specimens, brightly painted and most beautifully named. There was one called the "Sweet William," which particularly took my fancy, and I should dearly have loved to sail in her up the Medway or along the Essex coast. But, alas, there was apparently no one on board of her, and I had no opportunity of proposing myself as a passenger. From the market-place of Grays a whole fleet of omnibuses leaves at six o'clock precisely for different parts of South Essex. They start off one after another and go careering down the country roads. Omnibuses have their faults, but if one does not possess a car, there are worse means of locomotion on a balmy summer evening. Tempted by the oppor-

tunity of seeing Rainham Hall again, I abandoned all thought of returning home by the *Crested Eagle*, and was soon in country which, despite its nearness to London, has not quite lost its ancient rural character, and has a queer charm of its own, though, perhaps, it is a charm which it takes an East Anglian to appreciate. Flat it certainly is, but it is not dull when you come to know it. The trams, and unlovely villas and workmen's dwellings of East London will, I suppose, reach Rainham all too soon. But at present the village remains much as it was; and the exquisite Georgian village house which John Harle, a prosperous merchant and ship-owner, built for himself in 1729, is not yet hemmed in by mean streets or factory buildings. What a gem of a house it is! I could not but commend the taste of my great-grandfather, who, after having thoughtfully eloped with an heiress still in her teens, brought her here to live, while he risked her fortune on the turf. Of its period and kind—it is in no sense a manor house, and could never have had much more land attaching to it than the few acres of its walled garden—Rainham Hall is one of the most perfect examples of the domestic architecture of the Age of Taste that I can recall. It is a modest and dignified English home, exquisite in its details. It stands close to the old church, with its squat tower and dumpy spire, and lies back only a short distance from the street, from which it is separated by a very beautiful wrought-iron clairvoyée. It is a square, three-storied house, built of red brick with stone quoins. It is not over-ornamented, but such

ornament as there is, for example the elaborate front porch, is altogether lovely. On my way back to London I could not avoid the reflection that my grandmother had selected her birthplace with a care which some of her descendants would have done well to imitate !

Night was falling as we passed through Poplar and Stepney, and entered the deserted city. When we passed Temple Bar and came into the glaring, crowded Strand, it was like entering another country, peopled by quite different people from my fellow voyagers on the *Crested Eagle*. Had I made a voyage into England, and returned again to Great Britain ? That, at all events, was how it felt.

ENVOI

FROM Gothenburg to Sassnitz, from Sassnitz to Hamburg, from Hamburg to Cologne, from Cologne to Liège, from Liège to Paris, from Paris to a village at the back of Cannes, from Cannes to Paris, from Paris to London, from London to Esbjerg, from Esbjerg to Copenhagen, and from Copenhagen back to Gothenburg—this little round, completed in about six weeks, has left me as it would leave most men, in a mood of rather melancholy reflection. The more one is bumped and hurried about Europe, in the company of hundreds of other poor devils all undergoing the same torture, and all endeavouring to while away the tedium of railway travel by discussing the conditions (always bad) in their respective occupations and countries, the more dejected one becomes. What a life! What a world! And yet one is not even allowed to make a satisfactory grimace of disgust at the whole business, for no sooner has one decided to take the advice of Job's counsellors and to make a few terse observations to the Almighty before putting one's head in the gas oven, than along come those amazing compensations which somehow make the job of living worth the pains. A kiss of affection, a handshake, a winter sunset on the Estérels, the first wild, intoxicating day of Spring, a child's shy confidences, a book which says all the things

one has wanted to say for years and never known how : these are the sort of things which reconcile one, rather disconcertingly, to the trivial round, the common task.

To return to railway travelling, I wonder whether, a generation hence, when the "grand rapide," the "D—zug," the "Treno di Lusso," and all the rest of them have become as antiquated as the stage coach, there will be found any liars foul enough to sentimentalise over these forms of locomotion. At present, with the permanent ways in the condition in which the war has left them, Continental train journeys, besides being boring, are not even reasonably safe. Travelling in France, in particular, is a severe test for the nerves. Personally, I would far sooner consign my bones to the safe keeping of a drunken Paris chauffeur than to the engine-driver of a French express who has half an hour's lost time to make up. And on top of the general tedium of travel there is, once again, at all events for second-class travellers, the distress of hearing of other people's distresses. Alas, for the poor unfortunate "educated middle-class"—the professors, the magistrates, the people with positions of some dignity and a fixed salary ! In France, in Germany and even in Sweden their lot is indeed unenviable, ground as they are between the upper and the nether millstones of capital and organised labour. Poor wretches, they cannot "organise," and even if they could, their political principles would not allow them to do so. In Sweden I heard of a scientist of European distinction whose salary as "docent" at one of the

Universities was considerably less than that of a bricklayer. The Swedes, like the Germans and the majority of the French, are gluttons for work, and I have never yet met a Swede of either sex who seemed at all dissatisfied with working six full days a week. And, as in other countries, whereas the organised labourers have satisfactory conditions and high wages, it is the clerks and stenographers, who feel themselves higher in the social scale, who have the poorest time. This, I think, is partly due to the fact that the Swedish labour market is overstocked with well-educated young women, often the daughters of quite rich men, who want to work in offices in order to make an addition to their dress allowances. It is the eagerness of girls of this class to obtain jobs, in order to get more pocket-money, which reduces the salaries and renders harder the conditions of their less fortunate sisters. The usual hours of work for clerks is from 9 to 7, with two hours off for dinner. During the busy fortnight before Christmas, a pupil of mine, who is employed as a stenographer, hardly ever got off before 11 o'clock at night. She was not expected to take more than half-an-hour off for dinner, and had to work an extra half-day on Sundays. For slaving in this fashion neither she nor her fellow-employees got a word of thanks, or any payment for "overtime"; nor, when the slack season came, was the slightest concession made in the way of leave of absence. The staff are expected to arrive at five minutes before nine, and if any of them ventures to leave at a few minutes after seven, instead of waiting for an extra twenty

minutes or half-an-hour, the fact is immediately commented on by the manager. An English employer of labour who treated his employees in such a manner would rightly be regarded as an infamous scoundrel, unfit for decent society. But in Sweden not a shadow of blame attaches to the "sweater," nor do the sweated seem in any way to resent their treatment. They love their work for its own sake, and the richer their employer becomes as a result of their unceasing toil, the more pleased and proud they are. Such a state of things would be understandable in France or Italy, where men and women will work themselves to the bone, day in, day out, year after year, with a definite object in view—to save enough money in order to get a nice little home in which to pass in idleness the evening of their days. But the Swedes, although they yield to no one in their love of money, are by no means a saving race; and the average Swede lives fully up to his income and often beyond it. The problem is a baffling one. Perhaps, one reason for the Swedish love for unremitting toil is to be found in the fact that the country must be almost uninhabitable for people of leisure. I think a good many Swedes understand this subconsciously, and whenever they do find themselves with a little free time on their hands off they go at once to France or Italy or Spain or England.

The principal danger that I foresee in the starvation of the scholarly professions, which is going on in France, in Sweden, in Germany and also in England, is that education will become increasingly specialised and exclusively utili-

tarian. Men will cease to read for "Greats" at Oxford, and the spirit behind the Cambridge toast: "Here's to Higher Mathematics, and may they never be any damned use to anyone," and even the toast itself, will soon be totally forgotten. We may, perhaps, look forward to a whole generation of public schoolboys without enough Latin among them even to translate the tag "*et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*," and to a time when the only degrees conferred in our Universities are Diplomas in the Art of Plunder. Meanwhile, if we *are* just entering on a Mechanical Age, I really think the Big Business Men who manage these matters might hurry up a little, and give us an immediate instalment of the good things to come—first by abolishing railway travelling and then by scrapping coal gas, that out-of-date invention which is now only tolerable to intending suicides.

Bump, crash, bang * * * * * I blinked, rubbed my elbows, saw there was no glass broken, and that we were still on the rails. It wasn't a smash after all. It was merely that the driver of the Riviera *rapide*, after about half-an-hour of profound deliberation, had come to a rather sudden decision to leave the station of Lyon-Perrache. I "composed myself," as the saying is, for sleep, and must, indeed, have dozed off, for the next thing I remember is watching the sun rise from behind a line of low jagged hills. The clear morning sky was suffused with dazzling light. It was a moment of unimaginable excitement, of ecstasy. It seemed as if the burning fiery rim was never going to appear above the

rampart of dark rock, and then at last, up he came. *O sol pulcher, O laudande !*

It was worth while, by Jove, it was worth while ! Only those who have lived, sun-starved, in northern countries, will be able to appreciate just how worth while it was to travel for days and be rewarded by that January sunrise. The train swayed on towards Marseilles through the familiar Provençal landscape, and first the *Etang de Berre* and finally the Mediterranean appeared blue and tranquil and a little misty in the early morning light. On our way to Toulon my fellow passengers insisted on pulling down the blinds *in order to keep out the sun*. And this in January ! I reached Cannes in the early afternoon and not seeing Paul's familiar white sweater and blue béret among the crowd outside the station I deposited my suit-cases by the side of his brand new and most imposing-looking Tin Lizzy and made a dash for the sea. It was all precisely as the gayest P.L.M. poster paints it ! Sky and sea were deepest azure ; the sun shone warmly and brilliantly down upon the promenade on which numbers of people were sitting about in deck chairs, clad as lightly as for an English June. The white yachts in the harbour looked gay and enticing, the Ile St^e Marguérite lay dozing in front of the town, the great hotels with their vast yellow façades seemed to preen themselves in the sun's bright beams. I thought dejectedly of Gothenburg, and went off in search of Paul.

Days slip by all too quickly when one is perfectly happy, and this fortnight in the South on my friend's little property, which from the

beauty of its situation has often reminded me of Horace's "Sabine Farm," passed as in a flash. I spent one hectic night with some friends in Nice, and slept in an hotel in a little town near-by in which, in my bedroom, I found this pearl of announcements: "The Direction inform the customers that they put at their disposition a comfortable tourism car for shopping walks and excursions at very moderate prices. The car is the propriety of the hotel." (Alas, I fear it was the only "propriety" of which that particular hotel could boast.) And then, all too soon, it was time to go home. Lest I should mislead anyone in regard to the Riviera climate, I ought to interpose here that never, during all the months I have lived in Sweden, have I so shivered with cold as I did, after sunset, in the South. Paul's little Brazilian monkey and I used to shiver and gibber sympathetically together. But who, for the sake of sunshine and clear skies, would not gladly endure an evening fall of temperature and even the rigours of the mistral? I left Cannes on a warm afternoon, and stood in the corridor of the train, watching the sea until, after leaving Fréjus, we passed to the landward side of the Montagnes des Maures, whose crests were suffused with a miraculous rosy glow by the light of the setting sun. When I woke up the next morning it was to gaze upon a snow-covered landscape under a grey, snow-laden sky. Paris did not hold me long. I had put in several weeks there before going to stay with Paul, taking an intensive course of conversational American, and I wanted a day or two in my native city. But the more often I visit

Paris, the more I marvel at it. Despite the fact that one person in every three is a foreigner, despite the fact that many of its taxi-drivers are Russians with very little knowledge of French and no sense of direction whatever, it remains inimitably, unconquerably Paris. In this connection I may, perhaps, quote a remark made to me at a dinner-party in Grasse, given by a member of an ancient Provençal family. We had been talking about the influx of foreigners, particularly of Russians, into France ; and, as I had heard much about the dislike entertained by all Frenchmen for foreigners of every description my host's concluding comments came as an agreeable surprise. "After all, this influx of Slav blood will be very useful to France," he observed. "It is something quite new, quite different. And in two generations the descendants of these Russians will be just as good Frenchmen as I am myself." Pride of race expresses itself in many ways, but rarely, I think, with such wisdom, such profound good sense as this. With reason the French people pride themselves, and will continue to do so even in the article of death, upon having mastered and perfected the art of life.

En voiture ! Another train, followed by—almost without exception—the vilest cross-channel steamer that would be tolerated in any civilised quarter of the globe. If only the late lamented London and North Western Railway Company, now I believe known as the London Midland and Scottish, could take a hand in the game and break the monopoly ! The new packet boats which take the traveller from Holyhead to

Kingstown (or should I attempt to spell Dunlaoghaire?) are incomparably better than any channel packet which I have ever encountered. It would be a mercy both to Englishmen and Frenchmen if the existing fleet of channel steamers, with one or two exceptions, could be painlessly torpedoed. In the meanwhile, I unite my humble groan to the protests of more eminent travellers which appear from time to time in the English press. "*Can't something be done about it?*" is, I think, the conventional English attitude. I suppose our earliest ancestors said it first on the morrow of the battle of Hastings, and we have been saying it steadily ever since. Nothing, alas, can ever be done about anything in our beloved country. Things happen before we know where we are. A Jew has an idea, an Irishman and a Welshman (having the gift of the gab) "reconcile opposing interests," a Scotchman carries out the contract and an Englishman, purple with apoplectic rage, writes to *The Times* newspaper to say, "*Can't something be done about it.*" The poor Englishman was, of course, "done" hours ago, while he was having his world-famous bath. (We ought, undoubtedly, to get up earlier.) These bitter reflections are wrung from me less by the age and inadequacy of the cross-channel steamers than by the appearance of London after a six months' absence. Those of us who ventured a tiny, pained bleat about the destruction of Regent Street were reviled—in particular, I remember, by a writer in *The Star*, alas, a paper for which (for Low's sake among others) I have a deep affection—as being pedantic

highbrows with no real appreciation of architecture. The *Star* man told us to wait and see the magnificent "Renaissance palaces" in gleaming Portland stone which were about to arise. The old Regent Street, a rotten affair of stucco, which cost a paltry million, was nothing (he said) compared with the resurgent Regent Street which, when completed, would cost no less than £10,000,000. Oh, God. Oh, Montreal! A cruel taxi-driver relentlessly bore me, tired as I was, along the whole dreary length of the "Renaissance palaces," a few minutes after I emerged from Victoria. To be just, Piccadilly Circus, never distinguished during my lifetime (however elegant it may have been in the age of Nash) shows signs of improvement. And the new Quadrant, despite certain grievous pangs in regard to its predecessor, must be admitted to have its points. Again, the rebuilt Café Royal, if one were not rather ill-tempered about the whole proceeding, would claim a certain amount of respect. But as one advances up the street, as one approaches Oxford Circus and passes into Upper Regent Street! "*Can't* something be done about it," asks the unfortunate Londoner in blank dismay? Nothing, of course, can.

It has become perfectly clear that absolutely nothing in London is sacred any longer. London is nobody's business. Nobody cares enough. Nobody can do anything. Waterloo Bridge must go because it will employ more labour to build a new bridge than to underpin and restore the old one. Even Birch's. . . . Sweat drops from one's brow.

Even Birch, Birch & Co., of 15, Cornhill ! That ancient, ever verdant shop-front must now make way for a bank ; and they tell us that the oyster patties will be just the same in Old Broad Street. After such an event, I should not like to be the caretaker of a London cemetery. The agitation caused by the tens of thousands of old city merchants turning violently in their graves, unable to write to *The Times* newspaper, but thinking, in true English fashion, " Can't anything be *done* about it," must arouse such ghostly commotion among the tombstones that those in charge of these " towns without a market " must feel their job no sinecure.

I remember well, when I was a boy, being shown by my father the lovely late 17th century house in Lincoln's Inn Fields in which my grandfather spent most of the laborious years of his professional life. There, on the first floor, was the stately window of his office, through which, looking up now and then from his documents, he could see the same beloved trees under which, on summer mornings, I myself have sat so often. And there were funny anecdotes, which it amused me to hear (for the " professional " classes are just as interested in such matters as their superiors in the social scale) of the first of a dynasty of clerks, a crusted Dickensian character who suffered greatly from catarrh, who used to welcome prospective clients of the firm—country squires and such like—with the raucous injunction : " Shut that door ! " There was a tree in the garden at the back of this house—a few years ago, certainly, it was still there—under which my

father used to sit, in the summer, until his father was ready to take him along to "The Cock" in Fleet Street, or, perhaps, to the Law Society, for the Victorian mid-day dinner. Do I flatter myself that when I grow older I shall be able to take my sons to Lincoln's Inn Fields and be pleasantly reminiscent? Not a bit of it. One glance at the delightful square shows that it is doomed. Numbers 59 and 57, if they have not already gone, are inevitably signalled for destruction. "The Cock" is reconstructed. The Inns of Court will go within a generation. I shall never be able to show my sons the chambers in Verulam Buildings where my father, before he married, had "that amusing experience"; nor the musty chambers in the Middle Temple where my maternal grandfather, with red hair and a "Newgate fringe," spent so many years, so very profitably to himself, advising people "not to take the matter into court." (He was, I believe, a prodigy of legal learning, but no advocate.) All that constitutes London, for the Londoner, must go. Our poor old piles of brick that we so dearly love must be hacked away by the patient house-breaker in order that elegant "Renaissance palaces," so admired by the contributor to *The Star*, may arise in their place. The Jew, the Irishman, the Welshman, and the Scotch contractor will fix it up between them as before; and when the Englishman faces his bacon and eggs and opens his newspaper he will find, as usual, that it was all done while he was having his bath. The "Anti-Scrape" Society will issue its protest. And a few agonized letters will appear

in *The Times*, just as the last brick in Fountain Court falls to the ground amid a cloud of dusty mortar.

To revert to Paris. *Just imagine* Parisians allowing . . . With all their Russians, and their other immigrants, the Parisians are better off than the Londoners. I cannot believe that "Renaissance palaces," of steel and stone, will ever supplant the Place des Vosges.

Three crowded days, and "here we are again," as the clown remarked with his heart in his boots and his wife in an Islington attic, dying of pneumonia. "Here we are again!" Liverpool Street this time. I advise nobody who does not wish to die of depression to go to Copenhagen via Esbjerg in the winter months. Indeed, I advise nobody, who can possibly avoid it, to go to Liverpool Street at all. Of all the London termini it is the most grisly. The Danish boats, if you strike a good one, are very good indeed. But the misery of leaving London by Liverpool Street!

On the other hand, I would advise everybody who can possibly do so (preferably not by Liverpool Street) to go to Copenhagen. Of the three Scandinavian capitals it is the most delightful. It has all the ease and informality of London or of cosmopolitan Paris. It is a northern outpost of all that the world means by "civilisation." It has, at the moment, the disadvantage of being very dear. But no city can be blamed for the accidents of the exchange. It is gay, it has produced admirable art, its "atmosphere" is peculiarly sympathetic to English people, and it has many beauties. Apart from the official "sights,"

starred in *Baedeker*, there are two things which I would like specially to recommend to the Englishman in Copenhagen. The first is the "Hirschsprungs Musaeum"—a collection of Danish pictures painted during the past hundred years or more—and the second is the new Police Headquarters. The Hirschsprungs Musaeum will, I believe, come upon most English art-lovers as a revelation, for in it he will find paintings, of an astounding excellence, by artists whose names, however familiar he may suppose himself to be with the masterpieces of modern art, he will, in all probability, never have heard. The new Police Headquarters is also, in its way, a revelation. I have long had the instinctive belief that the art of architecture, which in England has fallen upon such evil days, is about to reach its highest European development in the Scandinavian countries. In justification of this view I have thought of the new Stadshus in Stockholm, and of certain new buildings in Gothenburg. In further support of it, I would advance, without fear, the new Police Headquarters at Copenhagen. To my mind this is a superb masterpiece, grand in conception and almost faultless in execution. If it has a fault, I should say that it was, perhaps, a shade more pictorial than practical. The building is criticised, in other words, by those who use it. I suppose the perfect building is one which combines beauty of design with convenience and utility; and it has been objected against this great work that its circular central courtyard has necessitated an arrangement of the offices which causes exasperating

difficulties and delays. Evidently it is a "studio" piece. One can see it very clearly in the model form. On the other hand, one can, I think, trace in the design something of that "aristocracy of the soul" which is the distinctive mark of genius, something also of that fine artistic asceticism (so lacking in Ragnar Östberg's masterpiece at Stockholm) which knows how to dispense with ornament. Never, in my experience, was a modern building less "ornamental." For its effect it relies upon qualities which make mere ornament, however charming and however much in perfect taste, seem by contrast merely trivial. I recommend this admirable and impressive work to everyone who takes any interest in the art of architecture. For its sake alone a journey to Copenhagen would be justified. But I can assure those of my readers who desire a change of scene, and wish to visit a great city which has not yet become a recognised tourist "resort," that Copenhagen has a great many other delights to offer them besides the ones I have mentioned.

Bump, crash, bump. . . . Off we go again! But after little more than an hour I find myself on the familiar ferry between Helsingör and Hälsingborg. The crossing, pleasant enough, takes only twenty minutes. I set foot in Sweden again with mingled emotions. I am glad at the prospect of being able to do some work amid surroundings only too conducive to prolonged toil. I look forward to seeing again my Swedish friends, and I feel urgent responsibilities towards my pupils. But the approaches to countries that one admires are often unappetising. (I think of

Newcastle and of Liverpool Street, and shudder.) And yet, if God has made anything more depressing than the station restaurant at Hälsingborg I have still to experience it. "Here we are again," as the clown says—indeed, he has to say it, whatever private agonies may cut him to the quick. "Here," with the bump and bangs of railway trains in our ears, and confused impressions of home, of heaven, and of a dismal kind of hell of almost universal suffering and discontent in our minds, "here" indubitably, ladies and gentlemen, "we are again."

MOUGINS,

GOTHENBURG.

February, 1926.

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NORTHERN LIGHTS *and* SOUTHERN SHADE

Loitering in Brittany, Scandinavia
and Elsewhere

DOUGLAS GOLDRING



